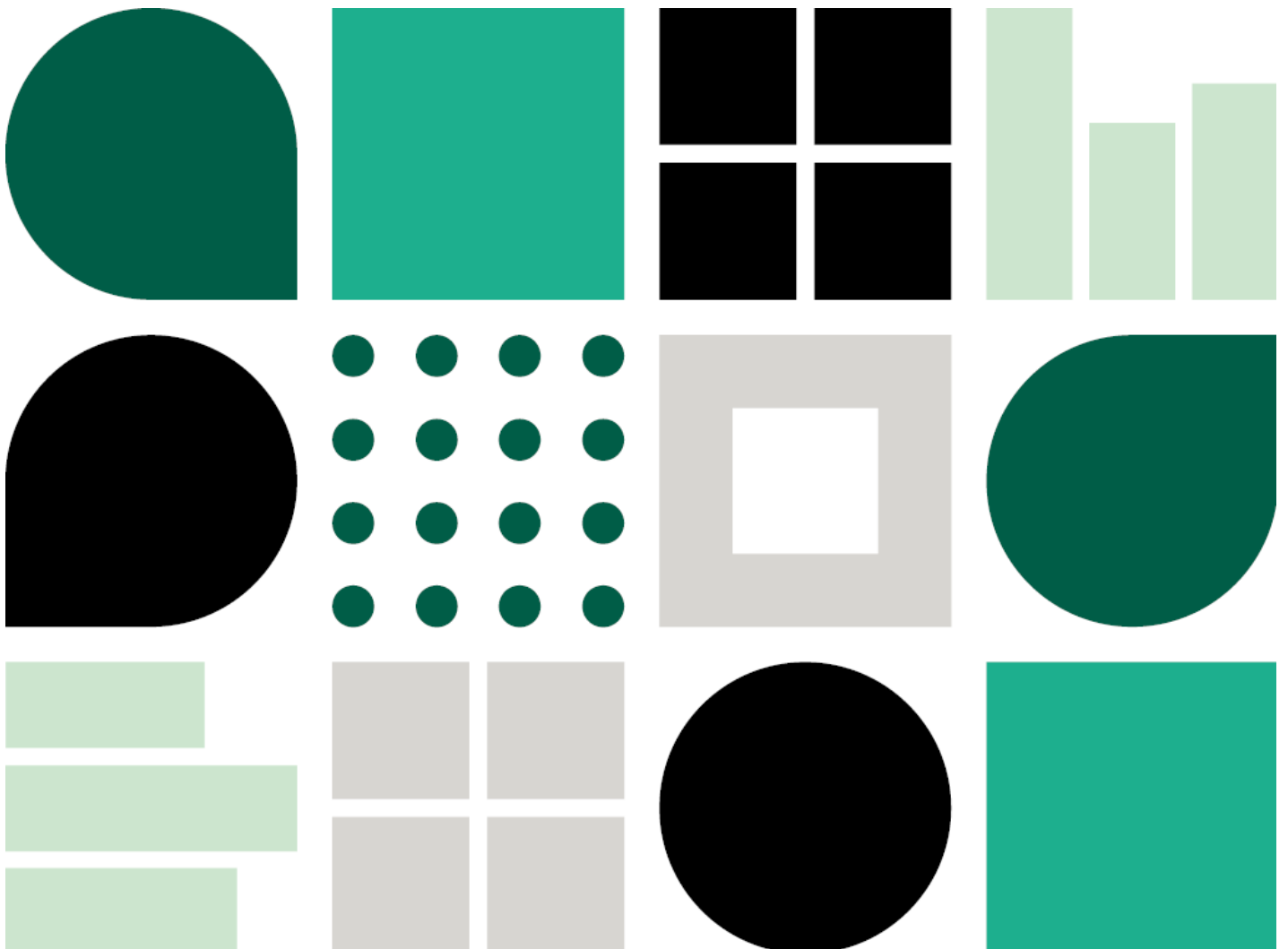


# Environment and climate as a trade union issue

Insights from work within the  
Swedish Commercial Workers Union



## **Environment and climate as a trade union issue.**

This is a report in the report series of the Swedish Commercial Workers Union (Handels) for in-depth studies and analyses on the industry, labour market and society. The reports in this series are independent products from Handels' research group that are intended for trade union and political decision makers, researchers, journalists and members who are interested in in-depth studies on the commerce industry and labour market. This report was written by Martin Briland Rosenström, Josefin Lundmark and Frida Sundqvist, researchers at the Commercial Workers Union (Handels).

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# Kapitel 1. Introduction and background

## 1.1 Introduction

A major environmental and climate transition is taking place around the world. Since the transition affects economic distribution in society, the labour market, occupational roles and the situation of employees, trade unions find themselves in the midst of this transition. This means that every trade union organisation needs to relate to the environmental and climate transition and in some way become involved in influencing development. This is of the utmost importance. Unless the trade unions work for a just transition that benefits employees, the outcome is likely to be the opposite.

Members of the Commercial Workers Union (Handels) have called on the trade union to act. This has resulted in several studies that revolve around the environmental and climate transition. These studies are merged and linked together in this report. In that way several questions that are relevant to trade union work are addressed, for example:

- What does a trade union perspective on environmental and climate issues include?
- What opportunities and challenges can the climate transition mean for workers?
- What may the trade unions need to work on to protect members' interests in the environmental and climate transition?

Our answers to the questions do not provide a universal recipe. But our hope is that this report can serve as a basis for analysis, reflection and inspiration in other trade union contexts.

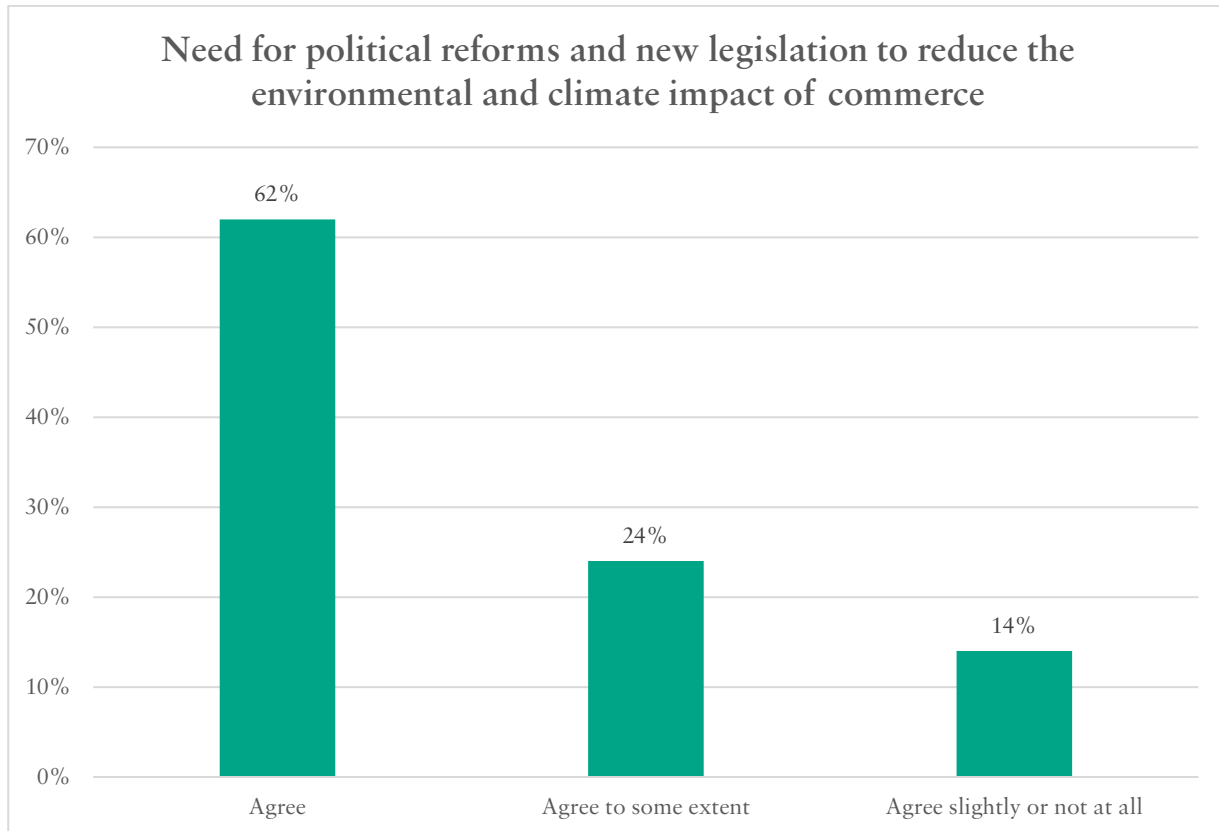
One goal is also for this report to contribute to intensified international cooperation on trade union issues related to environmental and climate transition. We live in a world where economies are global, where international giants set states against each other, where important rules of play are set above the nation-state, and where a large proportion of the emissions from consumption occur outside the country where the product is consumed. All in all, this means that international trade union cooperation on environmental and climate issues is one of the most important keys to achieving a sustainable just transition that provides a good working situation for employees.

## 1.2 Material and sources

This report analyses and binds together material from the four full-length reports concerning the environment and climate that Handels has been involved in writing since 2020. Here is a brief summary of these reports:

### Report 1: The View of Commercial Employees on Environmental and Climate Issues (2020)

The report analyses the results of an opinion survey among commercial employees in which their attitude to environmental and climate issues is analysed in many respects. The report examines their overall interest in and commitment to environmental and climate issues. The study also covers how employees view the industry and their own company's environmental and climate impact, as well as which actors should be responsible for a reduced environmental impact. The results show that respondents believe that both industry and trade unions bear a responsibility, but there is also a strong expectation of political reforms and a conviction that these are needed:



Not least this justifies the report which is then written in which proposed reforms and changes to reduce environmental and climate impact from consumption are presented.

## **Report 2 The Environmental and Climate Policy Program of the Swedish Commercial Workers Union (2020)**

Handels' environmental and climate work was initiated by a resolution by its highest decision-making body, Congress, to investigate the environmental and climate impact of commerce in its full complexity. This report is the result of that decision and was inspired by a report from the Swedish Trade Union Confederation (LO) on investment-led climate policy (LO, 2018). In addition to mapping the environmental impact of commerce at a level of detail that has not previously been done, the report also sets the course for how the environmental and climate impact of consumption of commodities can be reduced. The report presents over 40 proposals for measures aimed at policy, industry, and trade unions to bring about a reduced climate impact from consumption through a just transition (see further appendix). The report had a major political impact and became the subject of interest from researchers, authorities, the trade union movement and other organisations.

The environmental and climate policy programme also develops and enhances knowledge of members' attitudes to environmental and climate issues based on a questionnaire survey designed in collaboration with the public opinion institute Novus and the Unionen trade union. The mapping of members' perceptions showed that a very large proportion of commercial employees see a need for their own industry to reduce its environmental and climate impact.

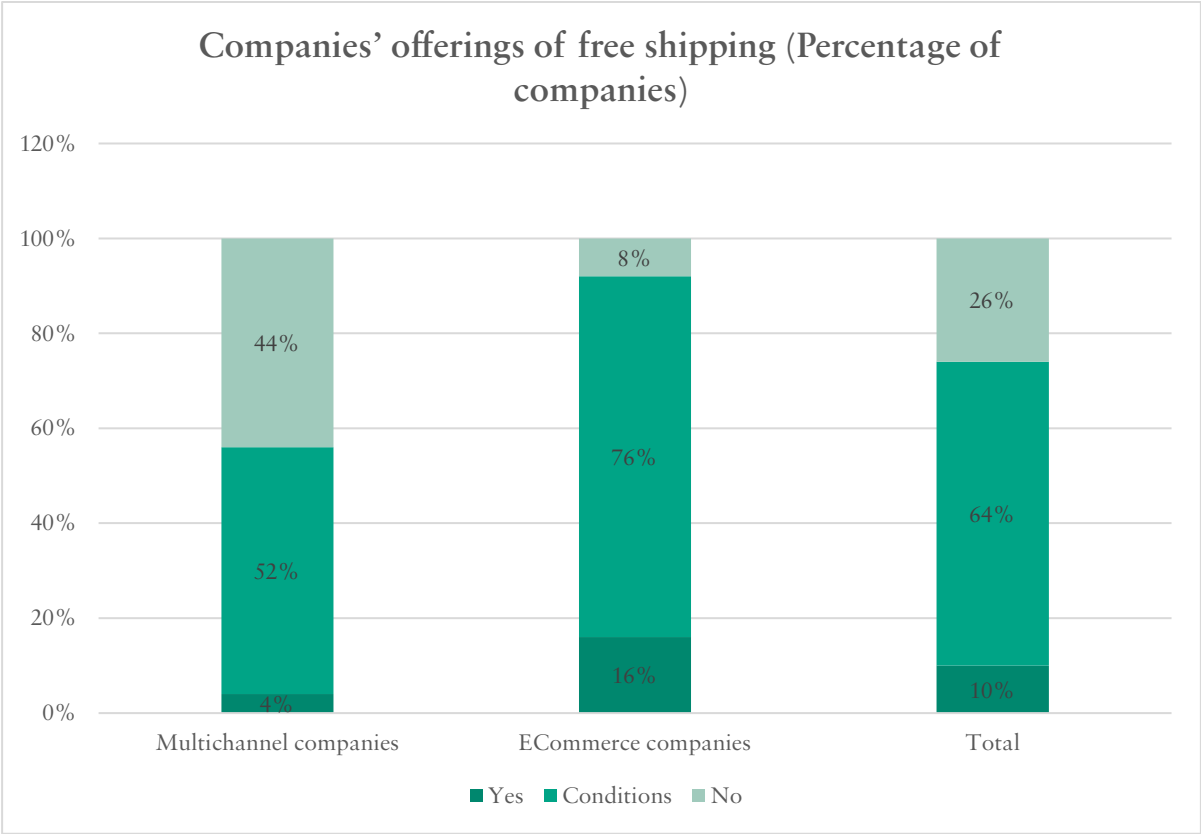
But they not only see a need for change, they also showed great interest and widespread willingness to engage. Against this background, the environment and climate grew to be a priority issue for the trade

union, as a matter of policy, but also as an area of member interest to take into account in different parts of trade union activities.

**Report 3: Free shipping at a high price? (2021)**

There was strong growth in e-commerce in the 2010s and during the pandemic year 2020 it was explosive. Through this, e-commerce has become an established form of trade that needs to be scrutinised in the same way as other forms of trading. It is important to consider how sustainable e-commerce really is, both environmentally and for the workers in the e-commerce chain from warehouses, via transport to delivery points.

No comprehensive study of the sustainability of e-commerce had been made until Handels carried out an analysis and review in collaboration with the trade unions Kommunal (Municipal Workers’ Union), Seko and the Transport Workers’ Union that resulted in this report. It identifies the environmental sustainability gaps that exist in e-commerce, while the stress and pressure experienced by workers in the e-commerce chain is made visible. It becomes clear from a description given in the report that sustainability gaps can largely be explained by online retailers’ competition to offer many shipping options, fast deliveries, and cheap deliveries. Deliveries are often not only cheap, but even free of charge for the customer:



Shipping is free for the customer, but employees pay instead with their health.

The problems with stress and pressure are found in warehouse environments and where packages are picked up, but it is also very clear at the transport stage. Here, price pressure has led to stress and poorer working conditions. The analysis in the report shows that this is particularly true in the new transport platform

companies that the growing e-commerce has opened up to<sup>1</sup>. Among these actors are companies that have exploited loopholes to escape employer responsibility and costs, thus creating unfair competition.

#### **Report 4: How employees can contribute to environmental and climate transition in commerce - About the role of employees and their expectations of the trade union (2022)**

The first two reports focused mainly on influencing policy and industry to make commerce more sustainable. External advocacy is one way for trade unions to work on environmental and climate issues, but there are many more. We therefore conducted an opinion survey in collaboration with the public opinion institute Novus to gain a better understanding of how members themselves want to contribute to the industry's transition, what obstacles they see and how we as a trade union can serve them in connection with their own contribution.

From the survey, it becomes clear that most of our members are interested in the environment and want to contribute to making the industry more sustainable. They want greater influence on companies' environmental and climate work. Many want to use it to help make the company more environmentally sustainable. But even more want to influence companies' transition into being both environmentally and socially sustainable at the same time. Most employees have a clear view that environmental and social sustainability must go hand in hand in the transition and that skills development with regard to sustainability needs to be improved. As the fourth report highlights, employees see a strong link between environmental and social sustainability and believe that the trade union has an important role to play in several respects.

### **1.3 Content and structure**

This report takes up a number of themes of trade union relevance from the reports described above that Handels has written in the field of the environment and climate. The themes each have a chapter and are independent in the sense that they deal with different aspects, but are connected in the sense that together they add pieces of the puzzle to show what trade union work on environmental and climate issues can mean. The following chapters can be found in the report:

#### **Chapter 2: A trade union perspective on environmental and climate issues**

Trade union work on environmental and climate issues is doomed to fail or be mediocre if there is no clear trade union perspective. The perspective needs to describe how the environment and climate is a trade union issue in many dimensions and how it variously concerns different parts of trade unions organisations. In this perspective, we present the approach we have taken for those who want inspiration in their trade union context.

#### **Chapter 3: Consumption-based emissions target – A case study on trade union political influence**

Handels wrote an environmental and climate policy programme that received a lot of attention and had a tangible influence on policy and the industry. This chapter highlights Handels' advocacy efforts linked to a proposal in the programme. The chapter can be seen as a case that can inspire a trade union organisation that has an interest in engaging in the environment and climate as a policy issue.

<sup>1</sup>In this context, the term "platform company" refers to companies that distribute work at the transport stage via electronic platforms.



#### **Chapter 4: Members' views on their role in the environmental and climate transition – Opportunities and obstacles**

Although a trade union can pursue environmental and climate issues as policy issues in order to achieve a just transition, environmental and climate issues from a trade union perspective are primarily about employees' interests, situation and conditions. In several reports, Handels has investigated employees' views on the environment and climate and the willingness and ability to exert influence. We have also studied employees' skills and skills development. This chapter summarises the main findings. Perhaps the most important findings from a general trade point of view are how the chapter shows points of contact between issues relating to social and environmental sustainability. Environmental and climate issues are part of the basic trade union work, which this chapter exemplifies.

#### **Chapter 5: What should the trade union do? – Members' views on the trade union's role in the environmental and climate transition**

Trade union work must proceed from the members. We have therefore asked employees in a study whether and how they believe that our trade union should work on environmental and climate issues. The findings are presented in this chapter. Of course, the findings are specific to our organisation, and we make no claim to provide a representative picture of the interest of members of trade unions in general. Instead, we hope that this chapter can inspire others to ask their members what they expect from the trade union and to think more broadly about what trade union engagement in environmental and climate issues can mean.

#### **Chapter 6: Plans and visions for trade union work on environmental and climate issues**

This chapter is very different from the other chapters that build on published reports based on research and studies. Chapter 6 deals with where we as a trade union stand today and what we want to achieve in environment and climate issues. We have established a political influence, we have developed a trade union perspective, we have the members' mandate to work on environmental and climate issues and a picture of what they expect from us. Now we need to meet those expectations and make environmental and climate issues a clear integral component in different parts of our trade union activities. Really making environmental and climate issues trade union issues in different parts of an organisation in different ways is a challenge that probably many trade unions face. This chapter summarises our thoughts on this and different considerations we take into account to find the way forward. It thus describes an attempt to start an implementation with our own organisation as a case.

## **Kapitel 2. A trade union perspective on environmental and climate issues**

The awareness that environmental degradation and climate change are a serious threat to humanity is today so widespread that most individuals and organisations feel that change is needed. This also applies within trade union organisations. But when studying environmental and climate issues in a trade union context, we have seen that environmental and climate issues are not, of course, considered to be central trade union issues or to affect their own organisation's work significantly in practice. Expressions like "there are no jobs on a dead planet" are certainly commonplace. But this is only one aspect among several that can be highlighted in order to establish the environment and climate as a strong trade union issue.

To get there, a well-founded perspective on the environment and climate is needed, which in several dimensions shows how the environment and climate is actually a trade union issue, not a special interest or individual cherished issue apart from trade union activities. It is not enough that that perspective exists in a leadership or in individuals, it needs to be broadly anchored. The foundation and starting point for the perspective must be what we as trade unions want to achieve and fight for, not what the organisation looks like or how it works today (Briland Rosenström & Palmgren, 2020). Such organisational factors play a role when initiatives are taken in practice, but it is not these that determine whether environmental and climate work is relevant to trade unions.

Based on core trade union values and targets, we have made analyses within Handels as the basis for a trade union perspective on the environment and climate that was presented in our latest report "*Så kan anställda bidra till handelns miljö- och klimatomställning*" (How employees can contribute to the environmental and climate transition of commerce) (Briland Rosenström & Sundqvist, 2022). The perspective has grown over the course of the work after we started focusing more on environmental and climate issues in 2019: through report writing, through discussions with reference groups and various parts of our organisation, through reactions from members and through interaction in trade union contexts both nationally and internationally. The process of developing the perspective thus differs from the usual approach. Typically, when you start working on a question at an early stage you set up a perspective as a starting point and examine what can justify it. But in our case, the starting point was a Congress resolution by the membership that we should work on environmental and climate issues. We have had to analyse and discover the full trade union perspective by working with environmental issues. A summary of our perspective on why trade unions should engage in environmental and climate issues now follows.

### **2.1 The climate threat is serious and the trade union has a responsibility as an influential social actor**

Immediate crises such as a pandemic, war and economic crisis tend to obscure overarching, persistent and more abstract problems such as the threat of environmental and climate collapse. But less attention does not mean that the problem is less. The pandemic did not entail a sustained change of course, meaning that the environmental and climate situation remains serious.

At the end of 2021, the International Energy Agency (IEA) could note that the use of coal power set a new global record after the economic recovery in the wake of the pandemic. Moreover, global demand for coal is expected to reach a historically high level in 2022 as a result of the global gas supply crisis that has pushed up electricity prices, according to the IEA (Energy News 2022, 11 March).

Just before the Glasgow Climate Summit, the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) released its report with mostly gloomy news about the climate. The IPCC researchers conclude that if we do not immediately, quickly and on a large scale reduce greenhouse gas emissions, we risk passing two degrees of warming in the coming decades. The Paris Agreement's 1.5 degree warming target alone will lead to more and longer heat waves. At two degrees, extreme heat waves will occur more frequently and lead to critical effects on agriculture and health. Other extreme weather conditions will also increase with warming, such as cloudbursts, drought, rising sea levels and melting glaciers. The report notes that climate change is definitely linked to human greenhouse gas emissions and global warming (IPCC 2021, 9 August).

In 2021, the UN's World Meteorological Organisation (WMO) also released an analysis of climate change over the past 50 years. A review of weather disasters since 1970 shows that on average there has been one weather and climate-related disaster a day, causing 115 deaths per day, most in developing countries. Droughts and storms accounted for most of the deaths. Seven of the ten costliest natural disasters occurred after 2005, where the costliest natural disaster ever was Hurricane Katrina, which hit the southern United States in 2005. The WMO, like the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, estimates that the trend of extreme weather conditions will continue (Svenska Dagbladet, Swedish daily newspaper 2021, 21 September; WMO, 2021).

The situation is thus so serious that all actors who have power and influence have a responsibility to work for a transition. This also applies to trade unions which, through their influence over work and production, are in a position where it is really possible to make a difference and be a voice in discourses concerning the environment and climate.

## **2.2 There must be a just environmental and climate transition**

When the trade union is a voice in the discussion about a transition for reduced environmental and climate impact, it is about promoting a just transition. Handels, like other trade unions, is fighting for fair and equal societies, both within countries and in solidarity with workers in other countries. This fight also needs to be fought in the fields of environment and climate. We know with certainty that a changed climate will have the severest impact on those who already have the least resources, and who thus have the least opportunity to adapt themselves to changing conditions of life. Global warming is therefore a significant threat to increased equality, which is one of the core issues of the trade union movement (Briland Rosenström & Palmgren, 2020).

But there are also potential threats to justice and equality in the transition itself. The transition can take many different forms. It is not given that the outcome will be a just transition. On the contrary, organisations that want a fair society but do not engage in climate transition issues leave the field free for other forces. Mainly unbridled market forces. But the market has so far proved as incapable of managing nature's resources as it is to distribute them fairly. That is why society, through democratic decisions on both regulation and substantial investment, needs to ensure that we stay within the limits set by the planet and at the same time create equal societies. Thus, the trade unions have great potential to play a key role in influencing policies towards a functioning, just transition that is compatible with good working conditions.

From a trade union perspective, one requirement for influencing the transition is common political solutions and agreements between different societal actors. No one can change a fundamentally unsustainable social system on their own. What is required is systematic structural societal change, which requires collective action, both within the framework of the nation state and through international cooperation. In uncertain times where the political landscape is polarised, there is a clear risk that nation states will close themselves off and look primarily to their own. Such a development needs to be countered because we need a just transition that is global and characterised by cross-border solidarity.

Promoting a just transition is not only about influencing how society and industries adapt in the environmental and climate areas, but about the distribution policies prevailing both in societies and between countries. In this sense, the environmental and climate transition is not a new trade union issue. Giving everyone realistic opportunities to adapt is to a large extent a question of evening out economic inequalities in individual countries as well as globally. As it is today, environmental and climate degradation is largely a symptom of economic injustice. There are major differences between how different countries and individuals affect the climate (Diffenbaugh & Burke, 2019; Hallegatte et al., 2016; UN, 2009). According to a report by Oxfam, the richest tenth of the world's population causes about half of all greenhouse gas emissions (Oxfam, 2015). Most of these emissions come from imports, consumption and air travel — called consumption-based emissions.

Those who lost most are always workers, and today it is mainly the workers in countries characterised by large class divides or widespread poverty. Here, problems of environmental degradation, poverty and poor working conditions reinforce each other. Several reviews and studies have highlighted how consumption contributes to the vicious circle of exploitation (Shamsher & Åkerblom, 2018; Scott Jakobsson, 2019; Sveriges Natur, 23 November 2016, 2 April 2017; Wåhlin, 2018)<sup>2</sup>. Where trade union organisation is inhibited and opposed, it can become even more difficult to deal with the problems<sup>3</sup>.

## **2.3 Good working conditions and good working environments need to be ensured in the climate transition**

Among the vast majority of members who, according to our studies, believe that the trade union should work on environmental and climate issues, there are a number of different opinions as to why. But among those who are more sceptical, the cause of the scepticism is almost always the same. The purport of almost all opposition to trade union engagement in environmental and climate issues is that trade unions should not work with side issues such as the environment and climate, but instead concentrate on core issues relating to employees' conditions and work situation.

The view is both legitimate and important in the sense that trade unions should not become like environmental organisations where the environmental issue takes centre stage in a way that affects the core trade union activities. The environmental issue as a matter of policy must not take over. But the problem with this argument is that the environment and climate are not just a matter of policy, but a question of a transition that affects the labour market, working conditions and occupational roles. As little as it is given how the climate transition affects fairness, it is given how it affects work and workers. What we know is that environmental and climate degradation creates work environment problems and ill health. Thus, processes of reducing environmental and climate impact belong together with work to create greater social sustainability for workers (Montt, Fraga & Harsdorff, 2018; Sall & Narain, 2018; WHO, 2018).

Because of this, environmental and climate change becomes an important issue for trade unions regardless of whether it is their task to work to save the climate or not. When industries adapt, employees' everyday lives are affected. This applies to work tasks and work environment and employees' working conditions. If trade unions do not engage and safeguard workers' conditions in the transition, there is a risk that they will deteriorate rather than improve. This trend can be seen in Handels' studies. Among our members, nearly 80 per cent see a risk that adverse changes in conditions are hidden behind arguments related to the

<sup>2</sup>These studies and reviews provide clear examples with respect to different products sold to Swedish consumers. There are examples of companies that have been criticised, but have taken several initiatives for both increased social and environmental sustainability (E-handel.se, 7 February 2020).

<sup>3</sup>Bangladesh is an example of the problems that lie in restrictions on workers' rights and opportunities to organise in trade unions (Shamsher & Åkerblom, 2018).

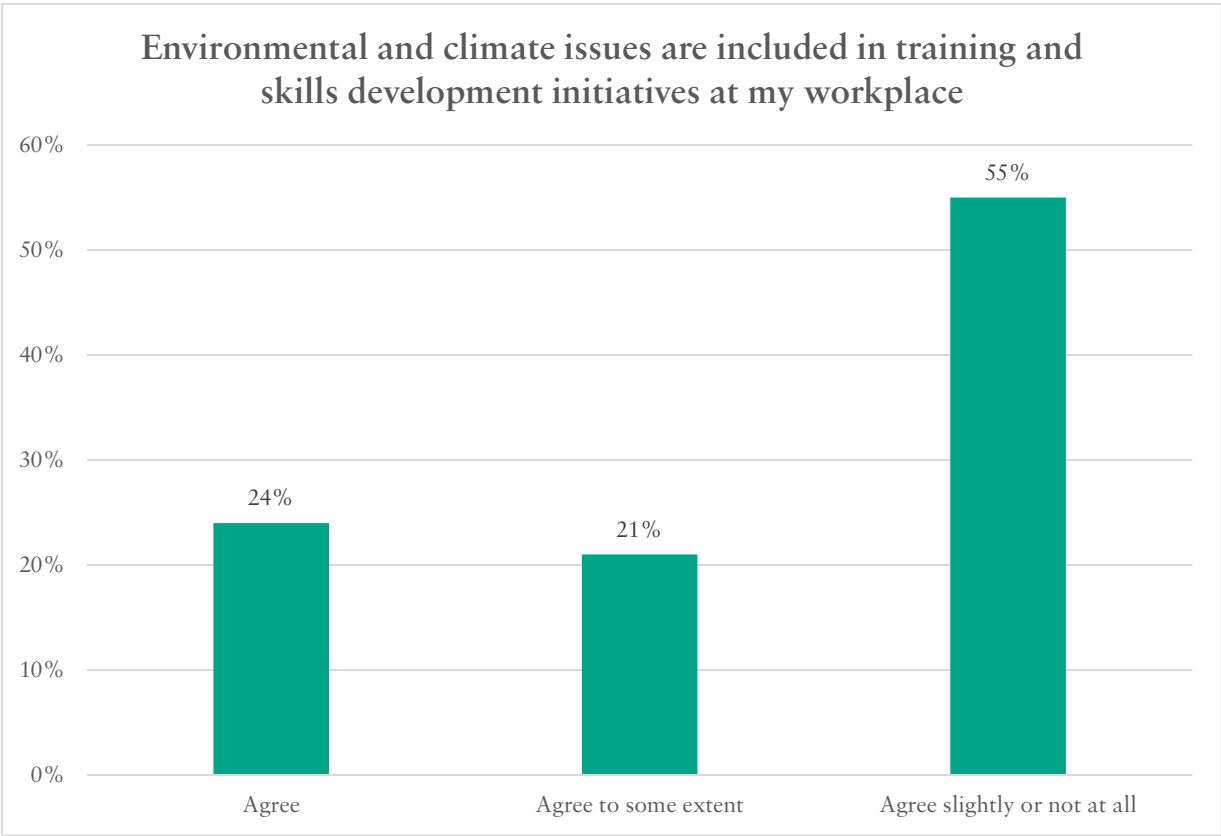
environment and climate change, and more than 70 percent also see a risk that there will be investments in environmental and climate areas that in the long run are negative for employees' conditions and working environments (Briland Rosenström & Sundqvist, 2022).

This means that it is important for trade unions to actually influence how the environmental and climate transition takes place even in basic trade union activities, based on the knowledge of what changes in the name of the environment and climate can mean for the employees' situation.

### 2.4 The transition requires skills development

The transition affects employees' work situation, but the most concrete change in employees' everyday lives relates to their tasks of work. Principles for carrying out work will change; existing tasks will change and new tasks will be added to existing occupational roles. This will probably apply to many industries and our trade union's studies have shown that it is highly relevant to commerce. Among other things, the transition requires mastering new skills linked to more circular commerce, such as being able to assess the value of second-hand goods and be able to repair goods. The transition also entails a need for increased skills in areas that have always been important, such as product knowledge. More and more demands will be placed on employees in stores to understand environmental and climate issues and to know the environmental and climate impact of their own products when interacting with customers.

Already today employees testify to shortcomings in skills development with regard to the environment and climate. Only 24 percent say there is adequate skills development with regard to the environment and climate, according to one of Handels' studies (Briland Rosenström & Sundqvist, 2022).



This is a disadvantage now and a risk for the future. The difficulty in carrying out the work has a negative effect on employees' state of mind and well-being, while at the same time reducing career prospects. This also makes employees' skills development a clear trade union issue linked to the environment and climate.

For companies, insufficient skills provision means competitive disadvantages, which in the long run can both worsen working conditions and lead to job losses. Although the main task of the trade union is to safeguard the quality of jobs that exist rather than the number of jobs, the employment effect of the transition is also a trade union concern. If the transition can be socially and environmentally sustainable and at the same time be compatible with good employment growth, it benefits workers.<sup>4</sup> Here, the trade union can contribute by influencing skills development in the industry and, as we will soon discuss more, by giving employees a voice.

Occupational roles are changing, but it is also the case that workers need to be equipped to be able to perform and be retrained for new types of jobs. The environmental and climate transition inevitably means that jobs will be both added and lost. Therefore, it is necessary overall to strengthen the social security systems and opportunities for transition and skills development in the Swedish labour market as well as in other countries. Unfortunately, the long-term trend has gone in the opposite direction, at least in Sweden. This applies not least to unemployment insurance, which has deteriorated significantly since the beginning of the 1990s, both in terms of conditions for qualification and benefit levels (Swedish Trade Union Confederation, LO, 2019) Nor are the systems for transition and skills development designed to cope with the extensive task ahead. To the extent that people in work are offered skills development, this is mainly short-term, non-formal training that mainly leads to better performance of the current tasks, not new tasks or other work (Nordström, 2016). This needs to be changed to ensure workers' security and opportunity for transition. Security in an environmental and climate transition that affects the labour market needs to be a cornerstone in every country and trade unions need to stand up for this.

In parallel with the climate transition, rapid digitalisation is taking place, which has an equally radical effect on the labour market and occupational roles. There is a great challenge for trade union organisations to deal with this development. What happens when climate and digital transitions work together and create strong pressure on transformation must be explored more in the future, based on the trade union's position of standing on the workers' side as industries and societies change.

## **2.5 Employees' commitment needs to be harnessed in the transition and their influence needs to be ensured**

A commitment to environmental and climate issues can also be a path to increased trade union strength in that more people become active in the trade unions. If trade unions harness employees' interest in influencing environmental and climate issues, a new gateway to becoming involved in the trade union movement will open up. Interest in environmental and climate issues can be a way to trade union engagement, not least for young people who have an environmental interest but lack experience of trade union work. In this way, the trade union's position can be strengthened. Studies have shown that among our own members there is a broad interest and commitment to environmental and climate issues. Many want to contribute to environmental improvements in their workplace and in the company they work for, but they rarely have any influence. Instead, environmental and climate initiatives are generally centrally controlled. In one of our surveys, 85 per cent of respondents say that the company's environmental and climate work is

<sup>4</sup> There is definitely a potential for job creation for a successful climate transition that has been documented. The International Labour Organization (ILO) has calculated that the goals of the Paris Agreement could result in 24 million new jobs, while at the same time six million jobs disappear (ILO, 2018). The Social Democratic association, Reformisterna, calculated that in Sweden this could probably create 150,000-240 000 new jobs (Svenska Dagbladet (Swedish daily newspaper) 2021, 23 March; Reformisterna, 2021) However, the outcome is uncertain. It depends on how fast and how different industries adapt. Here, the trade union can be involved in influencing development so that many jobs are created with good working conditions.

centrally controlled and that there are major shortcomings in employee influence. (Briland Rosenström & Sundqvist, 2022). This makes the environmental and climate issue a trade union issue also from a co-determination and work environment perspective.

Overall, this shows that it can be of great value to investigate members' and potential members' attitude to environmental and climate issues. The nature of the interest determines how we can be of benefit to members and strengthen trade union activities by working with environmental and climate issues.

That said, trade unions are not intended to be environmental organisations. Issues such as good working conditions, good working environments and well-functioning skills development always need to be at the forefront. This is also about giving employees a say in the environmental and climate transition. Otherwise, as this report will show, we risk a negative spiral of poor working conditions that will hinder influence over a transition that in turn can have a negative impact on working conditions.

The positive contrast to this would be a scenario where employees gain an influence that strengthens their position, rights and conditions, and the competitiveness of companies at the same time. A trade union commitment at workplaces to environmental and climate issues is about putting an end to initiatives that adversely affect staff, but it is also about providing space for employees' experience, knowledge, skills, and engagement in the transition that can strengthen companies, industries and, ultimately, entire economies. Getting companies to realise this benefit is also important for a successful transition.

## **Kapitel 3. Consumption-based emissions targets – A case study on trade union political advocacy**

A trade union can begin its commitment to environmental and climate issues in many different ways. It can, for example, start with the design of green collective agreements or by building up organisations around environmental issues in workplaces. For Handels, the commitment instead began in advocacy work towards industry and companies. The work focused on how we can achieve a reduced environmental and climate impact from consumption in a fair way, in a transition that is affordable and possible for everyone to participate in. The foundation of the advocacy initiatives is the report entitled ‘The Environmental and Climate Policy Programme of the Swedish Commercial Workers Union’, which was prepared as a result of a congress resolution. The report presents over 40 measures to reduce environmental and climate impact from commerce and consumption in seven different areas (Briland Rosenström & Palmgren, 2020).

This chapter presents the individual proposal for action in the report that is of the greatest importance and the advocacy work surrounding it, to give an insight into how we have worked with political advocacy on the environment and climate in an important area. The aim of the chapter is both to explain our view of having consumption-based climate goals and to briefly describe advocacy work linked to the issue that could possibly inspire political advocacy in other trade union contexts.

### **3.1 A consumption-based perspective on emissions with emission targets**

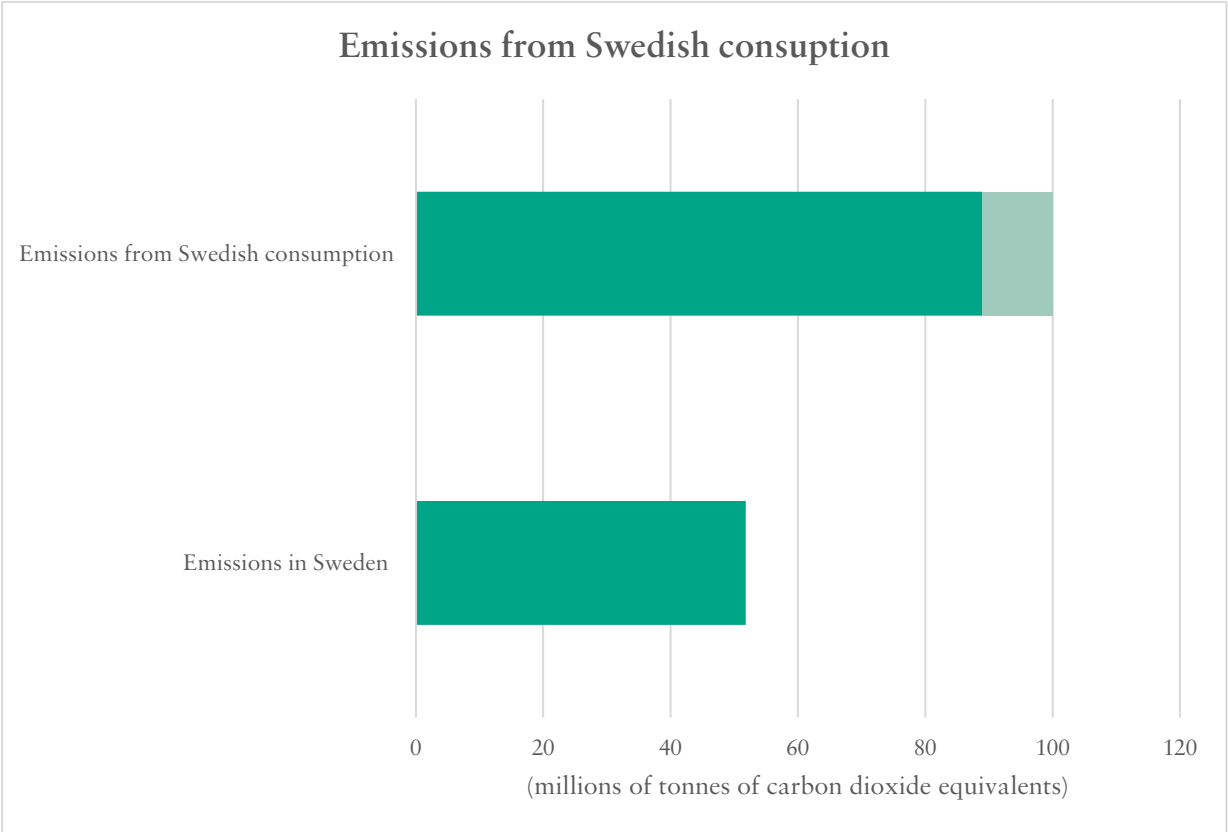
The proposal for action in the environmental and climate policy that is at the heart of the programme reads as follows.

*Introduce a national target for reducing consumption-based emissions. This should be designed as a milestone target towards climate neutrality also from a consumption perspective.*

Thus we presented a demand that Sweden should introduce ceilings and targets linked to the emissions of greenhouse gases from inhabitants’ consumption. This is the most fundamental demand we presented and is a requirement for the success of all environmental policy. It adds a consumption-based perspective based on Sweden’s responsibility for the emissions caused by its inhabitants’ consumption and lifestyle, regardless of where the emissions occur. In our research we soon found that Swedish environmental and climate policy almost completely lacked that perspective and that the focus was almost solely on curbing and reducing total emissions that occur within Sweden’s borders. Such emissions are referred to as territorial emissions.

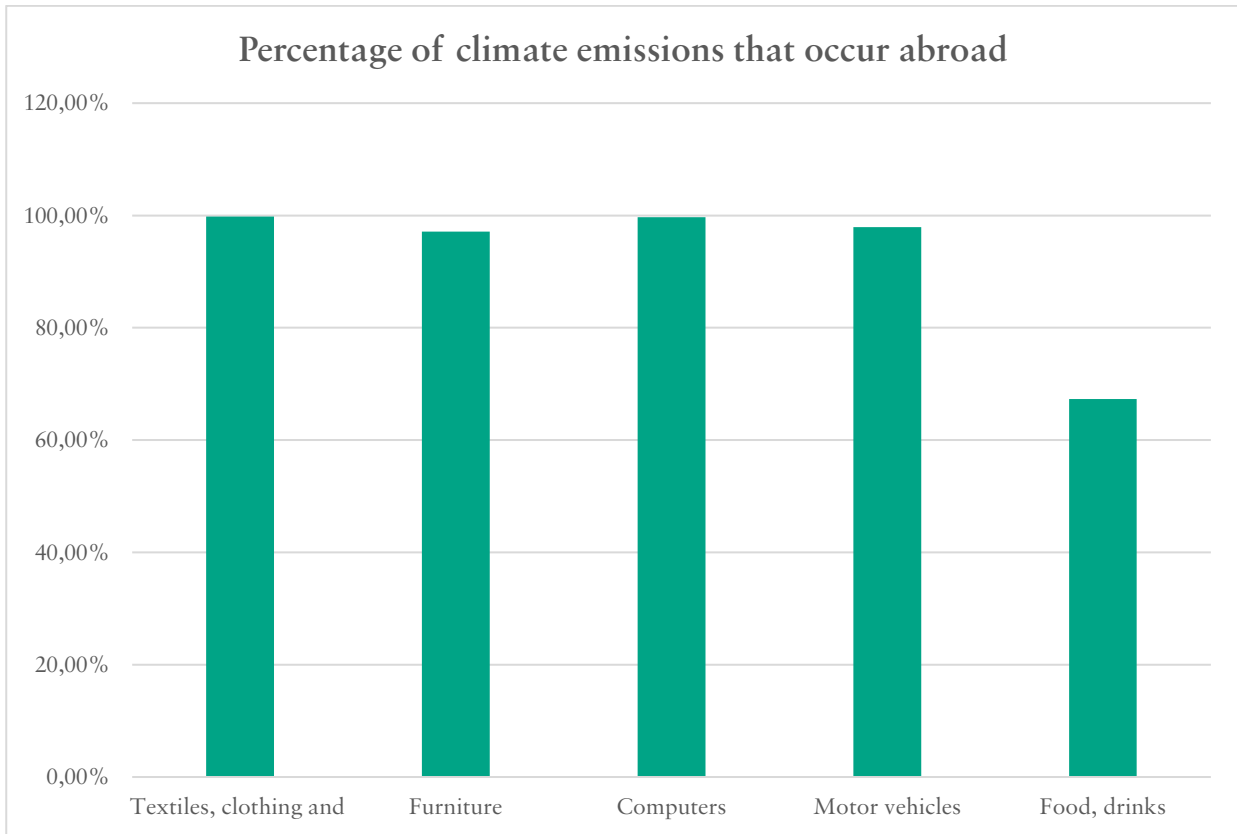
There are several problems to having a one-sided focus. One problem is that territorial emissions only cover some of the emissions that Sweden should bear responsibility for. In fact, consumption-based greenhouse gas emissions are in actual fact almost twice as high as the territorial ones.





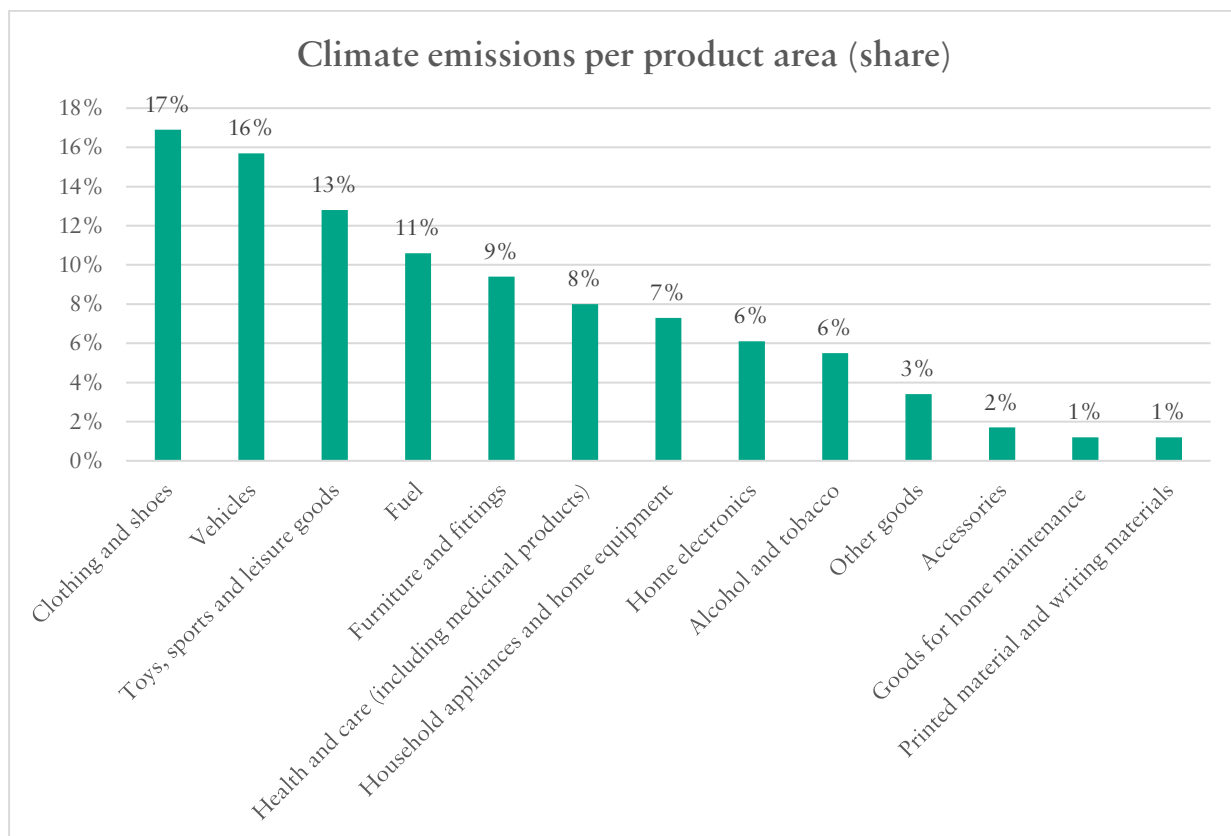
Sweden imports a large proportion of the goods directly consumed or used as inputs, i.e. goods used and consumed when other goods are produced. This is the main reason why emissions from consumption are so much higher than domestic emissions. But our national climate targets only cover the latter.

The inadequacy of a territorial perspective not only concerns the omission of emissions, but also the fact that the most effective way to reduce territorial emissions is to stop producing goods in Sweden. Then the emissions go from being in the statistics to appearing not to exist. Unfortunately, Sweden’s success in reducing emissions can be explained not only by the fact that we have become more environmentally efficient, but also by the fact that production of many goods has moved abroad. This is presented in the following diagram, which shows the proportion of emissions that occur abroad through production and transport for some of our common consumer goods.



Since many goods are produced abroad with emissions that feel distant, the emissions linked to an industry such as commerce become diffuse. As long as we discuss emissions in Sweden, commerce accounts for a very small proportion, about two to three per cent, but if we instead discuss the emissions caused by commercial goods, no matter where they occur, the picture becomes completely different. About 50 per cent of greenhouse gas emissions can then be linked to commerce.

In our analysis in the environmental and climate policy programme, we also examined how emissions are distributed between different types of goods. The survey showed that about 40 per cent of emissions can be linked to consumer non-durables (groceries) and 60 per cent to durables. As for the latter, there is a large spread of climate impact between different types of goods.



5

The spread of environmental and climate impacts on many different types of goods means that overconsumption needs to be tackled from a holistic perspective. It is not possible to focus entirely on a few individual types of goods. It is true that reforms aimed at individual types of goods and sub-sectors are needed. But, above all, broader reforms are needed to tackle the overall problem of general overconsumption.

In summary, a consumption perspective on emissions is needed to include all emissions, to make visible all the environmental impacts linked to different industries and goods, and not least to focus on how living patterns, culture and business affect emissions. Political and social discussions

from this perspective are becoming more common, but as long as there are no targets, many important reforms aimed at consumption are at risk of never taking place. In order to direct policy and have something to steer towards, a target for reducing emissions from consumption is needed. Therefore, consumption-based targets are one of the reforms that Handels has strongly emphasised in its report “The Environmental and Climate Policy Programme of the Swedish Commercial Workers Union”, and in the advocacy work that has taken place since the report was published.

### **3.2 Our political advocacy in brief**

The work to communicate the report’s message about the importance of having a consumption-based perspective and the reforms we propose began with the publication of the environmental and climate policy programme. The launch took place through an opinion piece in DN-debatt – the leading forum for debate in the Swedish media – and through a seminar that we organised. The seminar consisted of a presentation of the report and a panel discussion with the participation of our counterpart employers’ organisation the

<sup>5</sup> Share of emissions among goods that are not considered to be groceries

Swedish Trade Federation, Sweden's largest environmental organisation, the Swedish Society for Nature Conservation and the Swedish Minister for Enterprise.

The advocacy work has since continued through collaborations with other trade unions and non-profit environmental organisations, through writing opinion pieces and through a number of activities and commitments. Among these, the following can be mentioned.

- Meetings with central government agencies and councils that have an impact on Sweden's environmental and climate policy.
- Participation in several seminars in connection with the Almedal Week, Sweden's major annual meeting forum for political discussions between social actors such as politicians, interest organisations and businesspeople.
- Writing consultation responses to government ministries in response to various government inquiries.
- Participation in research contexts to acquire knowledge and create interfaces with academia.
- Motion writing to the LO Congress, which has led LO, a confederation of 14 Swedish trade unions, including Handels, to support the introduction of consumption-based targets.
- Advocacy work towards Sweden's largest party, the Social Democrats, to get the party to decide to promote the introduction of a consumption-based target, which then took place.
- Active participant in the Climate Goal Initiative, consisting of large interest organisations both within and outside the environmental movement with the aim of promoting the introduction of consumption-based emission targets. The Initiative has carried out political advocacy, both through meetings with parties and authorities as well as through forming opinion in the media.

### **3.3 The outcome- Introduction of consumption-based emission targets**

The advocacy work on the introduction of consumption-based emission targets, which Handels has been very active in, has produced a positive result. In April 2022, a historic political agreement was presented to introduce consumption-based emission targets. The agreement made Sweden the first in the world to launch such targets. The target set means that Sweden must have reached below zero emissions by 2045 with respect to carbon dioxide emissions (Swedish Government Official Report SOU 2022:15). As the target is defined, the term "zero emissions" does not mean that what we consume in Sweden has no emissions at all. The target is based on reducing emissions from what we consume by 66 or 77 per cent and that the rest of the reduction needed to reach the target will come through increased climate benefits from what Sweden exports and invests in abroad. In simpler terms, reductions in emissions from what we sell abroad should be credited in the assessment of how much we have reduced our emissions from consumption.

The obvious weakness is that the target is not linked to precise targets for reducing consumption-based emissions.<sup>6</sup> Emissions from consumption can both be reduced by making production and transport in other countries more environmentally friendly and by changing how and how much we ourselves consume. The proposal is not clear enough about how much we ourselves are expected to change our consumption or in what way. There is room to blame the lack of achievement of targets on the fact that other countries where goods are produced have not done what they should. This is the price of the politically sensitive issue of our

<sup>6</sup>Another shortcoming is that the target is not explicitly linked to a number of set times for partial follow-up and related evaluation.

lifestyles and the fact that political parties with completely different views on productivity and prosperity have had to support the target.

Nevertheless, the formulation of the target is a major step in the right direction. Through the formulation of consumption-based emissions targets, it has moved from a loose political discussion to something that needs to be taken into account in the context of national climate goals. It will be impossible in the future to pretend that emissions outside Sweden's borders do not exist, and it will be clear whether reduced emissions in Sweden are due to environmental improvements or just that production has moved abroad.

The formulation of targets for consumption-based emissions has also had the positive effect of making it necessary to examine the quality of statistics on emissions from consumption. Identified shortcomings have also led to the adoption of measures to develop methods for producing statistics. It is welcome because a common objection to targets linked to consumption has been that they do not make sense as it is difficult to know how great emissions from consumption really are.

## **Kapitel 4. Members' views on their role in the environmental and climate transition – Opportunities and obstacles**

The environmental and climate transition is a global justice issue that both affects and is affected by the situation of workers. This means that many types of initiatives and activities related to the environment and climate are compatible with trade union work. Political pressure on environmental and climate issues is just one of many possible building blocks. Ultimately, trade union work is about serving employees and safeguarding their rights based on how they experience their situation and what they want. The nature of employees' interest in the environment and climate, the role they want to fill in the transition and what is needed for them to fulfil that role is crucial to bringing about trade union work that produces results and that is legitimate for those the union is for.

It can therefore be to great advantage to find out how members view environmental and climate issues in connection with the introduction of trade union strategies linked to the environment and climate. This applies both to individual trade union organisations and as a basis for positions within the framework of cooperation between trade unions.

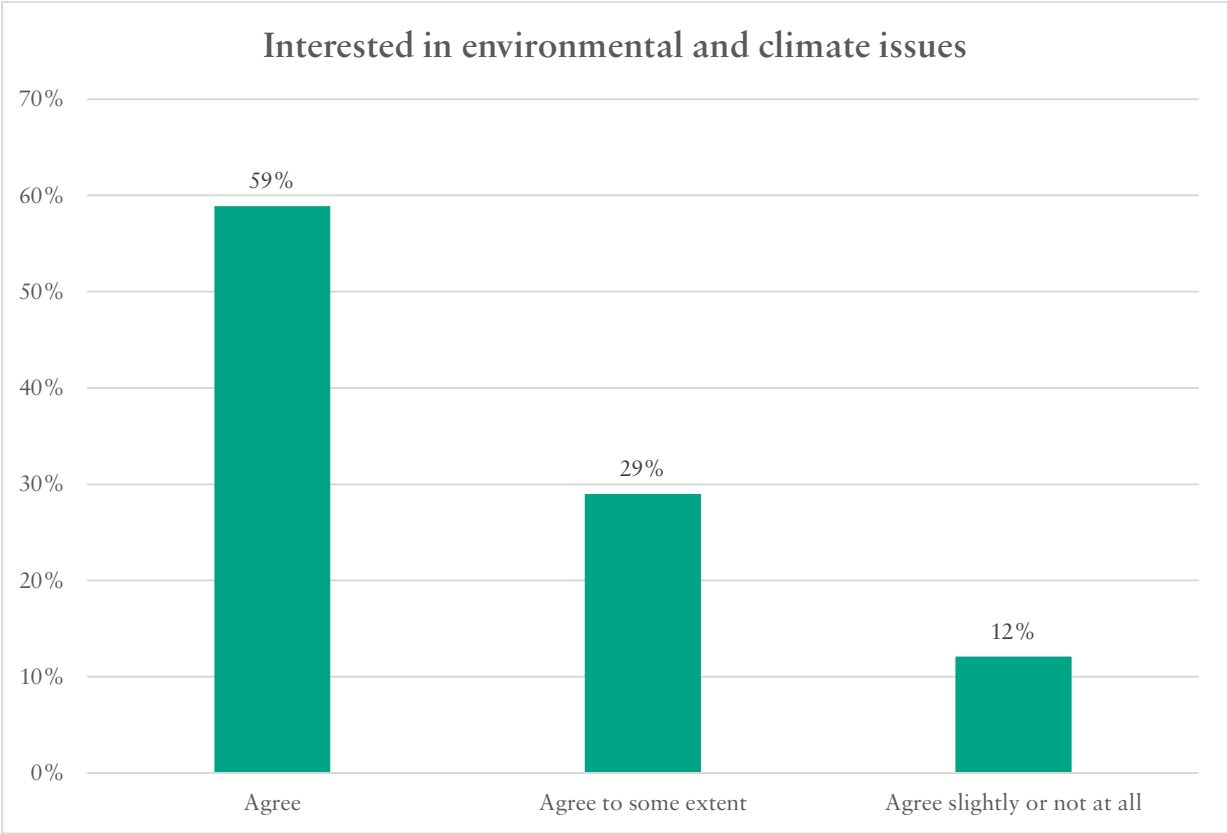
At Handels, in several studies we have investigated employees' attitude, interest and perceived situation linked to the environmental and climate transition in opinion surveys. The report now presents a selection of our questions and related results in the hope that it can serve as inspiration for other trade unions who want to gain an increased understanding of employees' perspectives on the environment and climate.

### **4.1 Members' views on the environment and climate and the need for a climate transition**

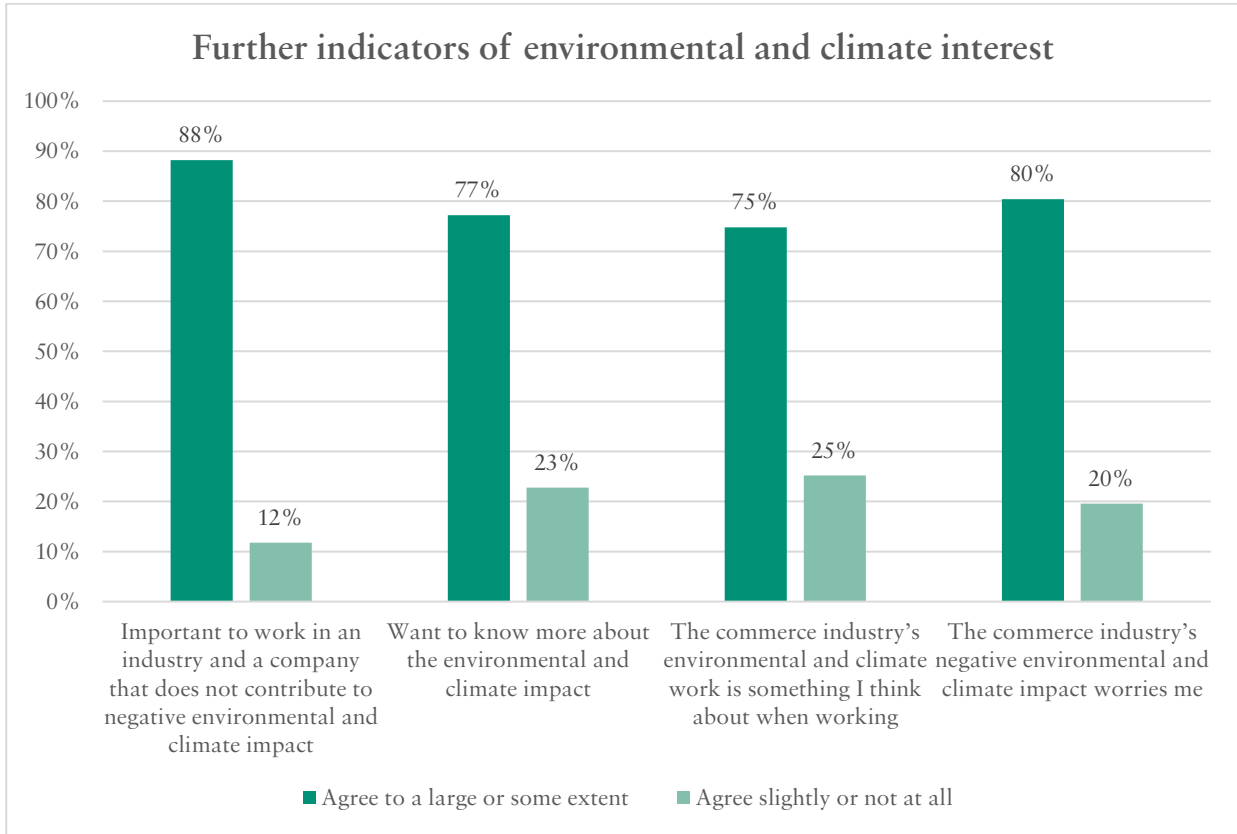
Without there being an interest in environmental and climate issues among members, it is difficult to justify greater trade union engagement linked to the environment and climate. The same applies if employees do not see a need for an environmental and climate transition. Handels has therefore put several questions to members about their interest and perceived change needs.

#### **Environmental interest of members**

To a direct question on whether the employee is interested in environmental and climate issues, nearly 60 per cent say they agree, and almost 90 per cent say they have some degree of environmental interest. Thus, a majority of Handels's members were shown to have an interest in the environment (Rosenström & Palmgren, 2020).



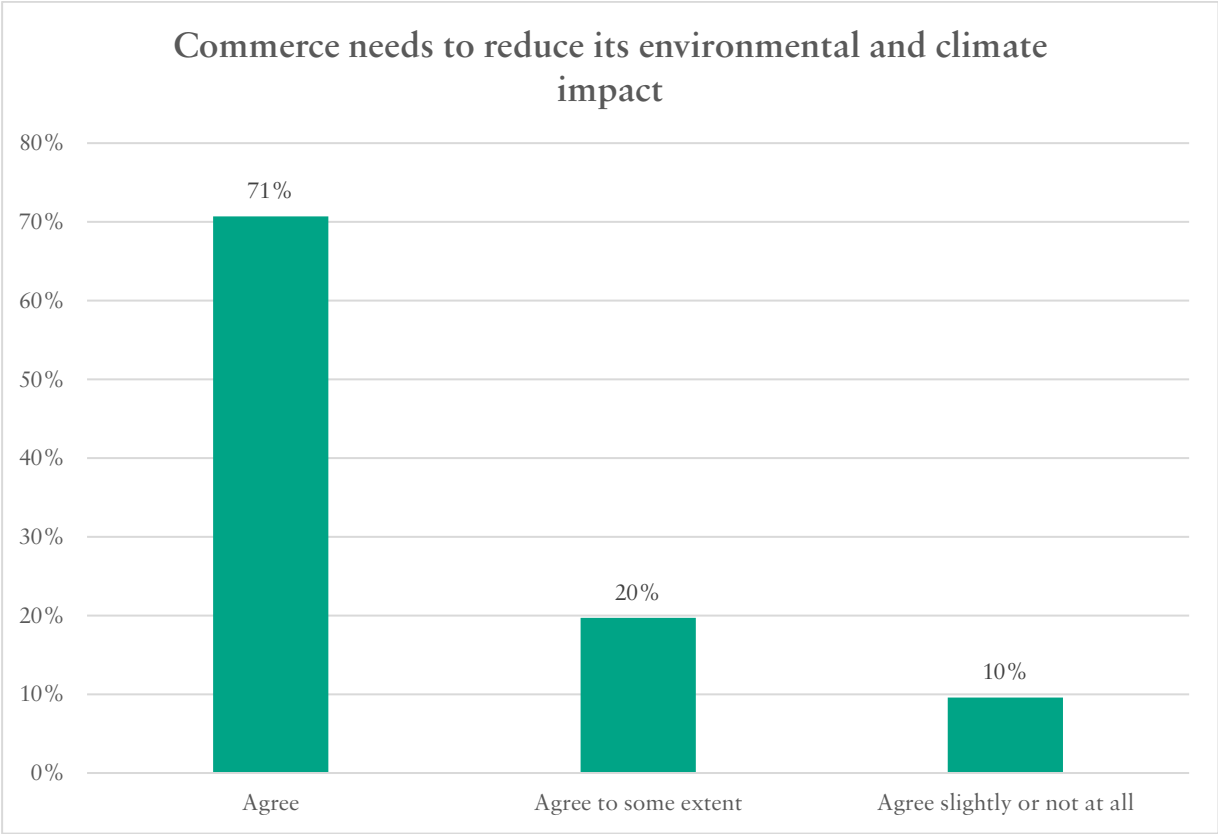
We also examined what the environmental interest consists of and whether it is something that is evident in the work they do. The responses strongly supported that the environmental interest is activated by employees' everyday lives and that thoughts related to the environment and climate are included in their work. More than 77 per cent call for increased knowledge about the environmental and climate work in commerce, 80 per cent are concerned about the industry's negative impact and 75 per cent think to some extent about the industry's environmental and climate impact when they are working (Rosenström & Palmgren, 2020).



### Members' views on the industry's climate transition needs

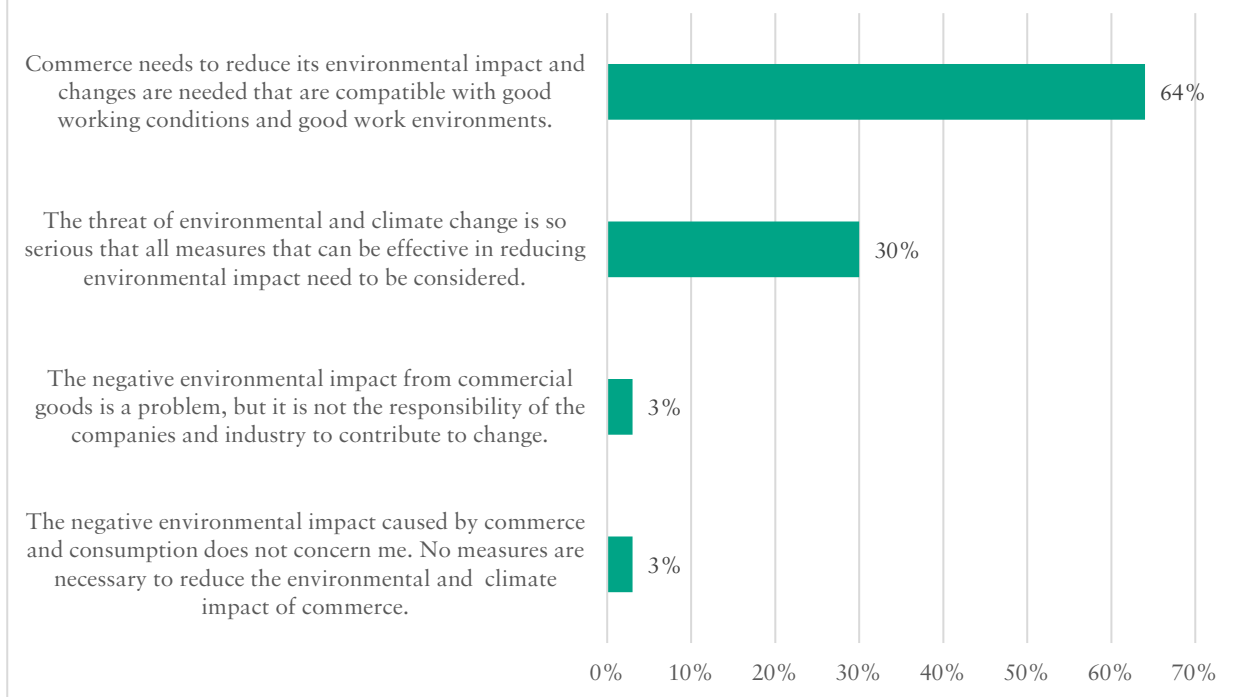
Concerns about the industry's environmental and climate impact indicate that employees see a need for commerce to change. We see this is true from the answers to a direct question. More than 70 per cent agree fully that the industry needs to reduce its environmental and climate impact, and more than 90 per cent agree fully or to some extent (Rosenström & Palmgren, 2020).





A large majority of Handels' members agree that the environmental and climate impact of commerce needs to be reduced. This, together with the great interest in environmental and climate issues, raises questions about what kind of change employees want to see. Are we an industry where employees see the environmental and climate issue as overriding everything or are there reservations? The answer is that the climate issue and climate transition is important, but not at any cost. Very few see no need for transition, but the proportion who want to see transition at any price (30 per cent) is also in a clear minority. The vast majority, 64 per cent, consider that the transition must be compatible with good working conditions and good work environments (Briland Rosenström & Sundqvist, 2022).

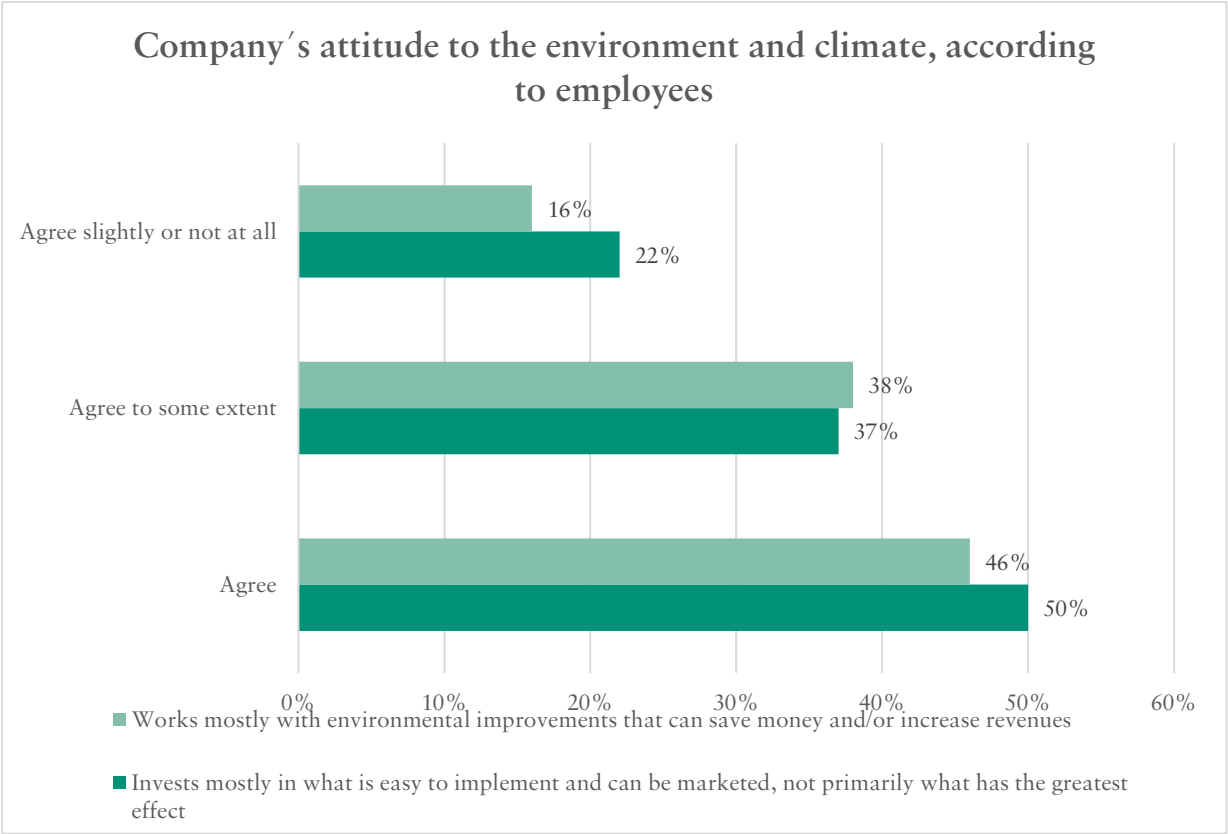
## Employees' perspective on environmental and climate transition in commerce



The result indicates that the trade union needs to be engaged in the environmental and climate transition in order to safeguard working conditions and working environments when there is change. As employees see it, the trade union cannot regard the environmental and climate issue only as a separate policy issue. It is a matter of a transition that affects their work.

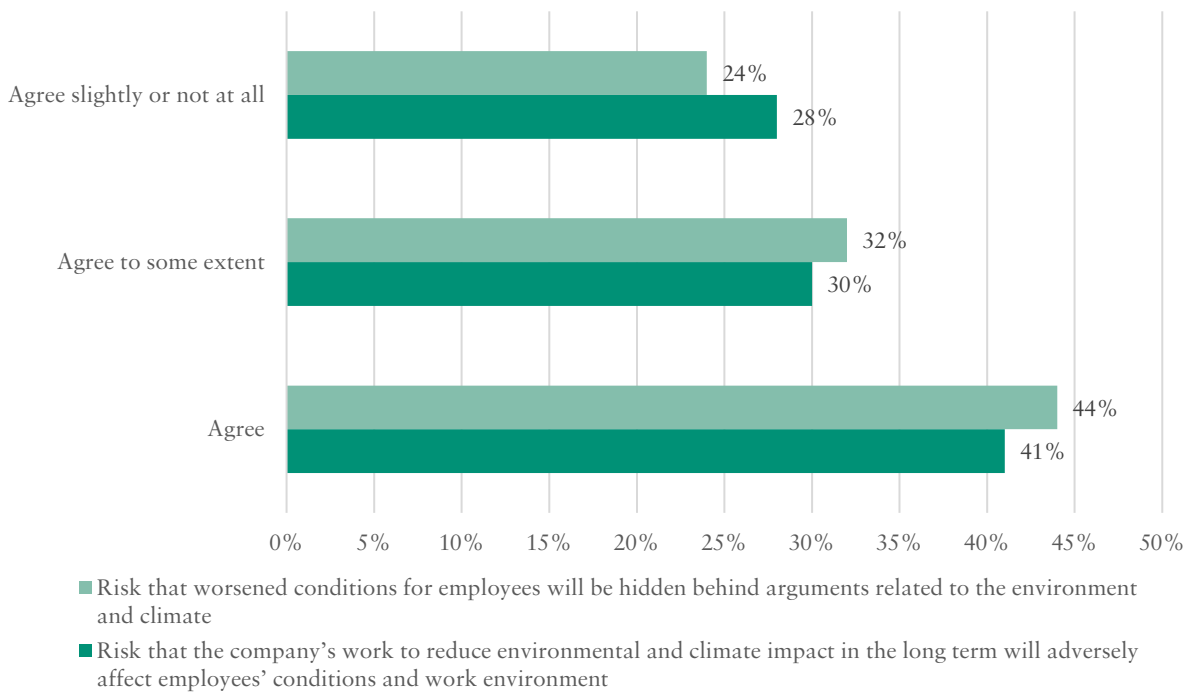
### **4.2 Members' perceived need to ensure good working conditions and good working environments in the climate transition**

The reason why employees want the trade union to safeguard good working conditions is that they do not trust companies to ensure their well-being in the transition. Many people believe that companies mainly have cost savings and marketing in mind and prioritise changes that are easy to implement.



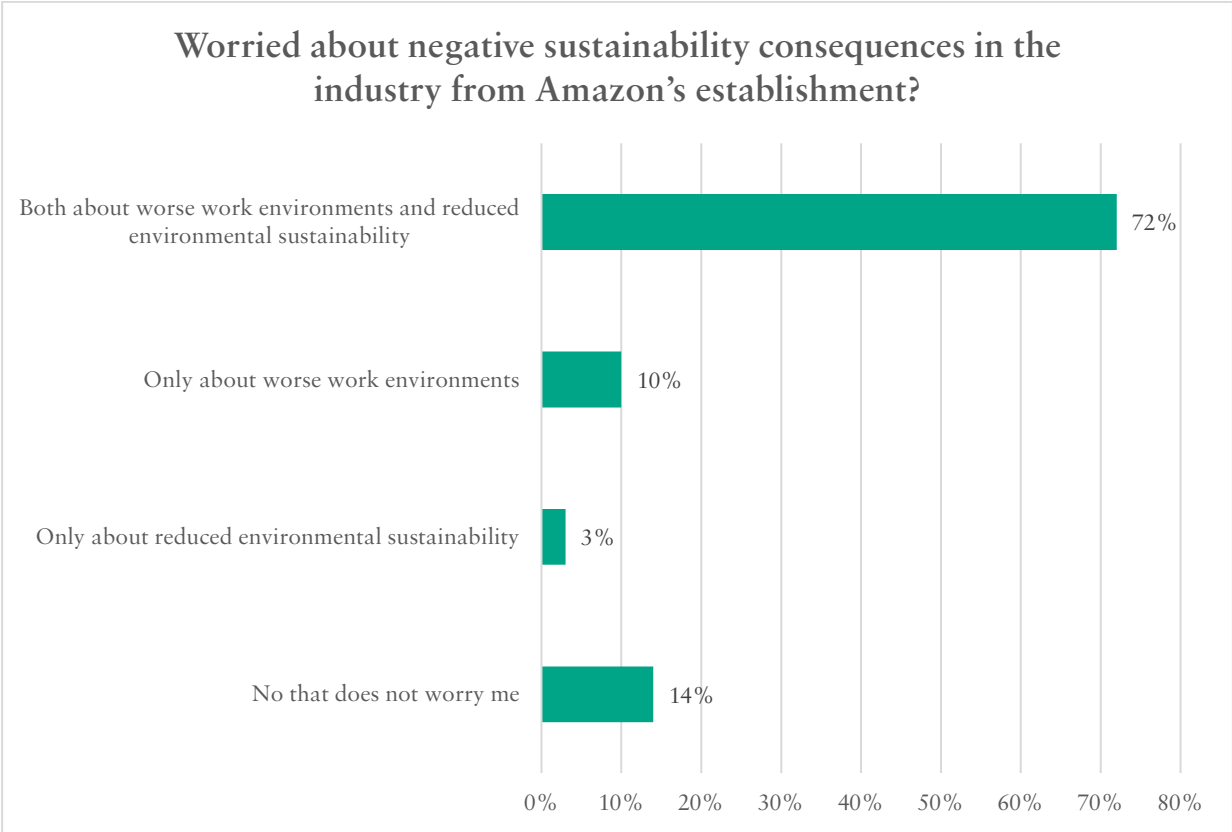
When these motives guide companies, employees think they are at risk of losing out. More than 70 per cent see a risk that cost savings and investments in the environment and climate could adversely affect their conditions and working environment. Even more, nearly 80 per cent, see a risk that worsened conditions for employees will be hidden behind arguments related to the environment and climate. When something is so cherished in society as environmental and climate issues are, it can simply be used as a pretext and excuse to make things worse for the staff (Briland Rosenström & Sundqvist, 2022).

### Environmental and climate improvements at the expense of the situation of workers?



Hardly anyone other than the trade union movement will work actively to stop this development and it underlines the importance of trade unions that understand the environmental and climate transition and how it can affect the situation of employees.

A specific factor in this context is Amazon. Many employees feel that Amazon's establishment in Sweden in 2020 risks affecting the working environment as well as the environmental and climate transition in the industry. 72 per cent fear that it could both impair the working environment and reduce the environmental sustainability of companies (Briland Rosenström & Sundqvist, 2022).

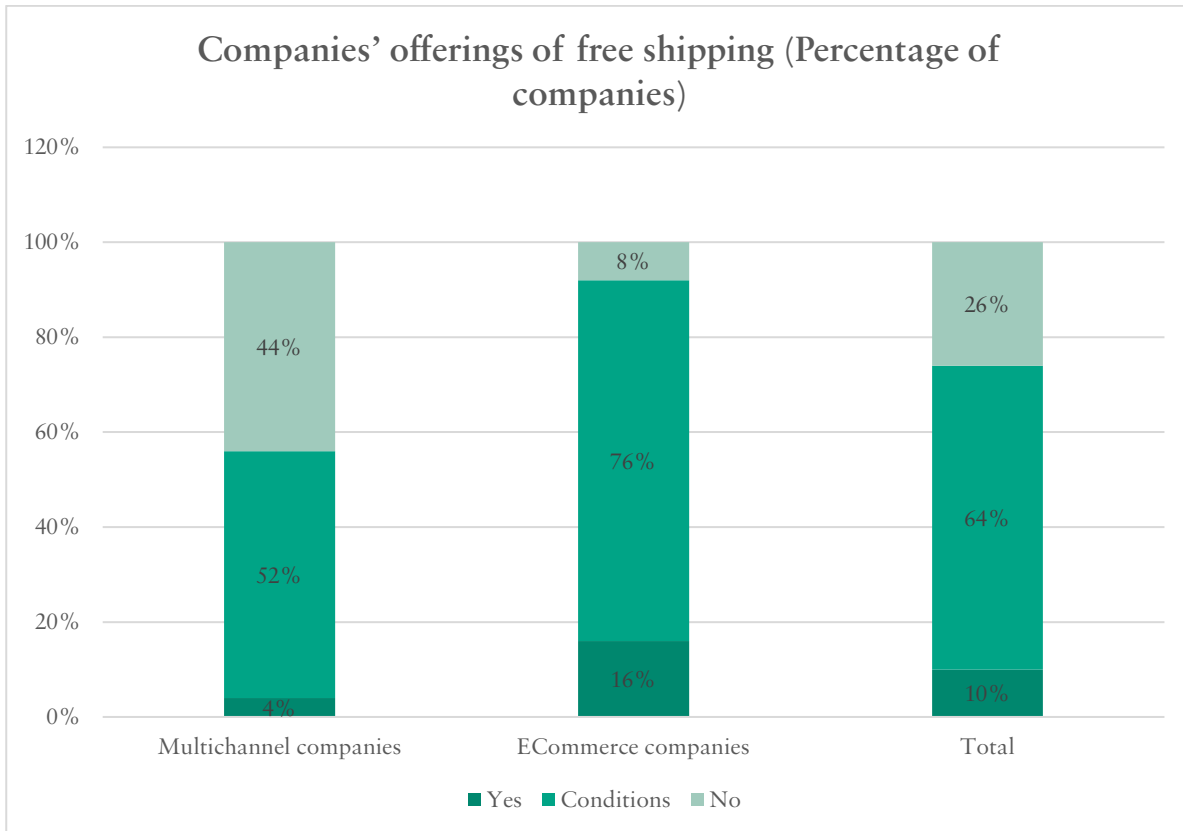


**E-commerce sustainability gaps linked to delivery options**

Concerns about the consequences of Amazon's entry should also be seen in the light of the fact that e-commerce in Sweden is already facing problems in terms of both environmental and social sustainability. The sustainability of e-commerce was examined in a special study that, based on employee accounts, points out the e-commerce companies' shipping offering as a major problem (Briland Rosenström, Burman, Palmgren & Tenggren, 2021).<sup>7</sup> Many companies that are major players in e-commerce come with promises of fast shipping that pull up the number of orders, which in turn forces employees to work at a very high pace in the absence of sufficient staffing. In this way, employees pay the price for companies using free shipping as a competitive advantage.

Three out of four major companies engaged in e-commerce have offerings that provide free shipping, to the home or to agents. It is particularly common in distinctly e-commerce companies, i.e. companies that started their business by offering e-commerce and that make the majority of their sales online. Here, over 90 per cent have delivery offers that mean free shipping to the customer. The large multi-channel companies that have e-commerce (traditional traders opening e-commerce), instead focus more on click and collect to drive customers to the store (Briland Rosenström, Burman, Palmgren & Tenggren, 2021).

<sup>7</sup> A study carried out by Handels in collaboration with the Transport Workers' Union and Seko (Union for Service and Communications Employees)



As the diagram shows, the most common thing is to qualify for free shipping by fulfilling a condition. That condition is usually that the order needs to exceed a certain amount, but that sum is often so low that it does not constitute any barrier to frequent shopping. The effect of cheap shipping is an abundance of orders for deliveries that increase stress and pressure on employees and that are bad for the environment. In addition, the fact that shipping is subsidised in whole or in part entails costs that contribute to companies restricting the number of staff.

Another problem is that companies compete with each other by offering multiple delivery options. This is particularly evident in metropolitan areas where companies offer an average of 3.4 delivery options, spread over 2.4 carriers. Companies that are traditional traders with a store network have fewer delivery options, which reduces the average. In distinctly e-commerce companies, the average number of delivery options is 4.2 (Briland Rosenström, Burman, Palmgren & Tenggren, 2021). The effect of this is that deliveries are spread between more shipments, which is negative for the environment but also for the workers at warehouses because it makes the work environment more complicated.

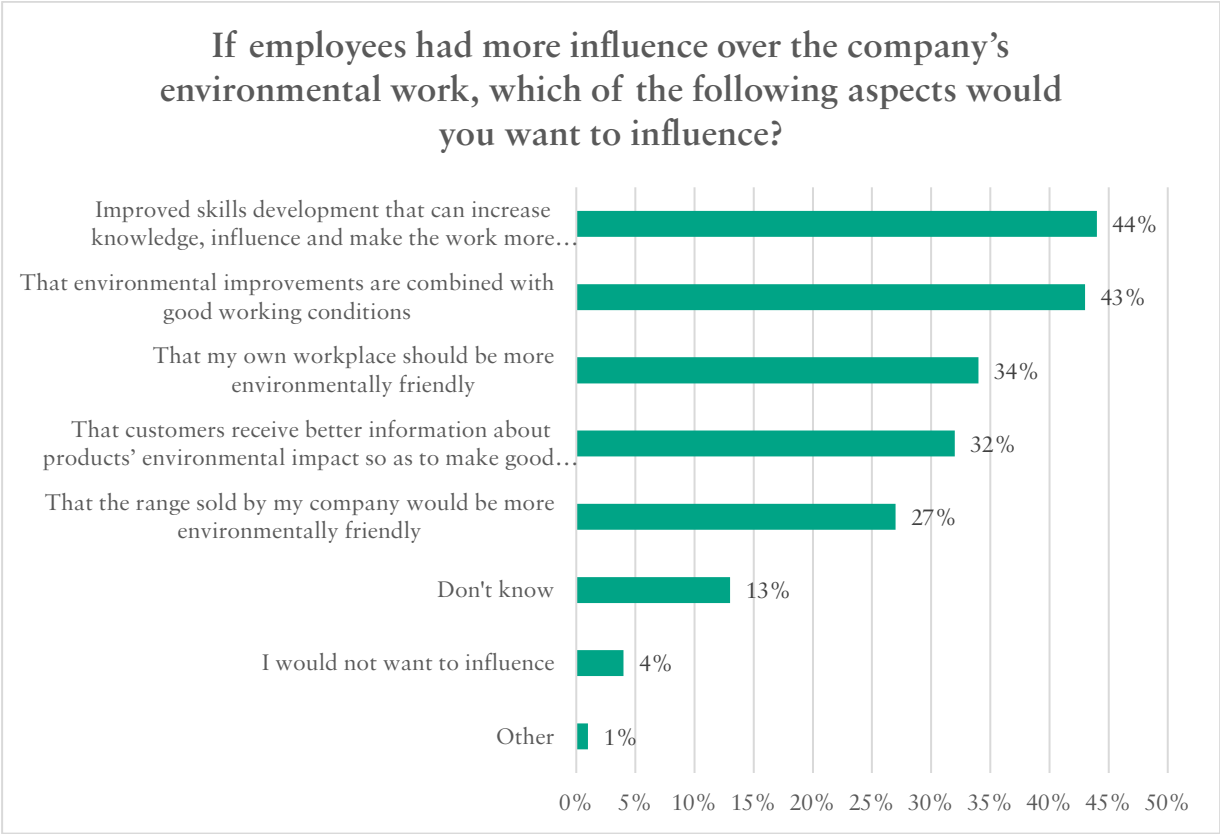
It is also mainly in metropolitan areas that new platform companies in the transport industry have gained ground. These companies often become competitive in part by dumping working conditions and by not taking work environment responsibilities.<sup>8</sup> Therefore, it is an important trade union issue to require platform companies to take responsibility for the work environment in e-commerce. It is e-commerce's delivery offers that adversely affect staff in both warehouses and transport.

<sup>8</sup> Platform companies in transport are characterised by the fact that they distribute work through digital platforms. They may have employees but often use self-employed workers. By not employing staff, companies circumvent work environment responsibilities, making self-employed workers particularly vulnerable from the point of view of health and safety.

### 4.3 Members' willingness to engage in and influence environmental and climate issues

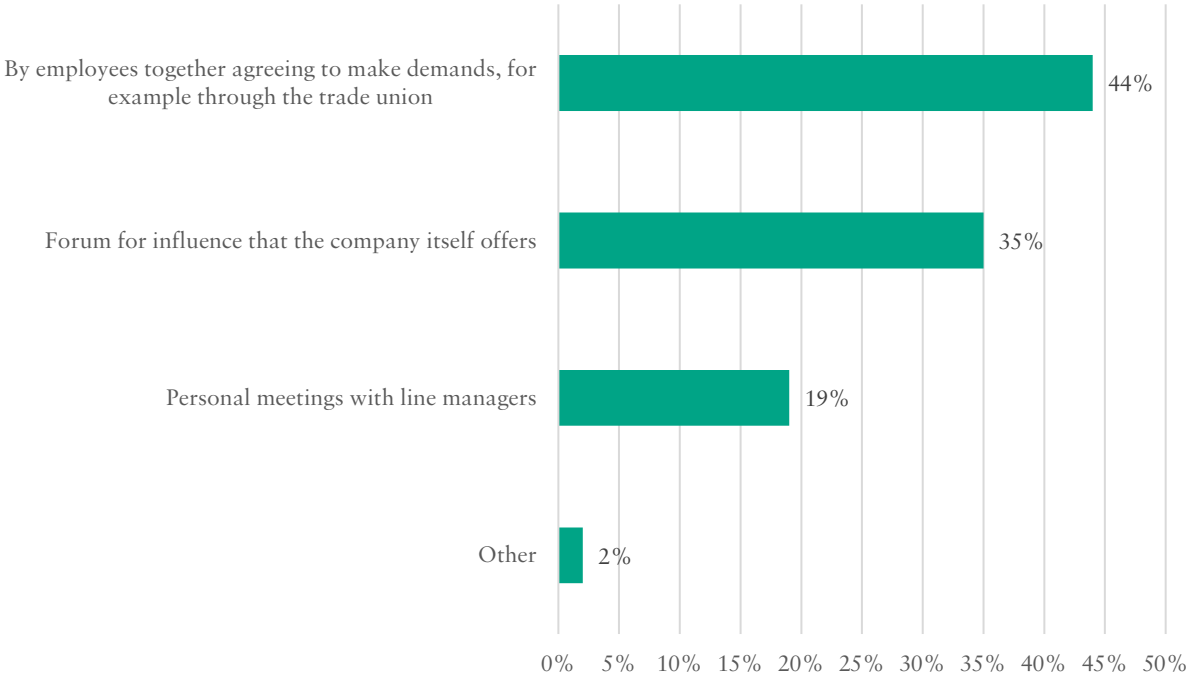
Our surveys clearly show that employees would like to influence companies' environmental and climate work, but that the power to do so is often lacking. 85 per cent believe that there is central control and about 90 per cent believe that employees should have an increased influence (Briland Rosenström & Sundqvist, 2022).

Only 4 per cent are uninterested in having increased influence. A large proportion want to exert influence so that environmental improvements are combined with good working conditions (43 per cent), which again underlines the importance of trade union work that ensures a good work situation when companies change through environmental and climate work. A willingness to contribute to improved skills development with regard to the environment and climate is also common (44 per cent).



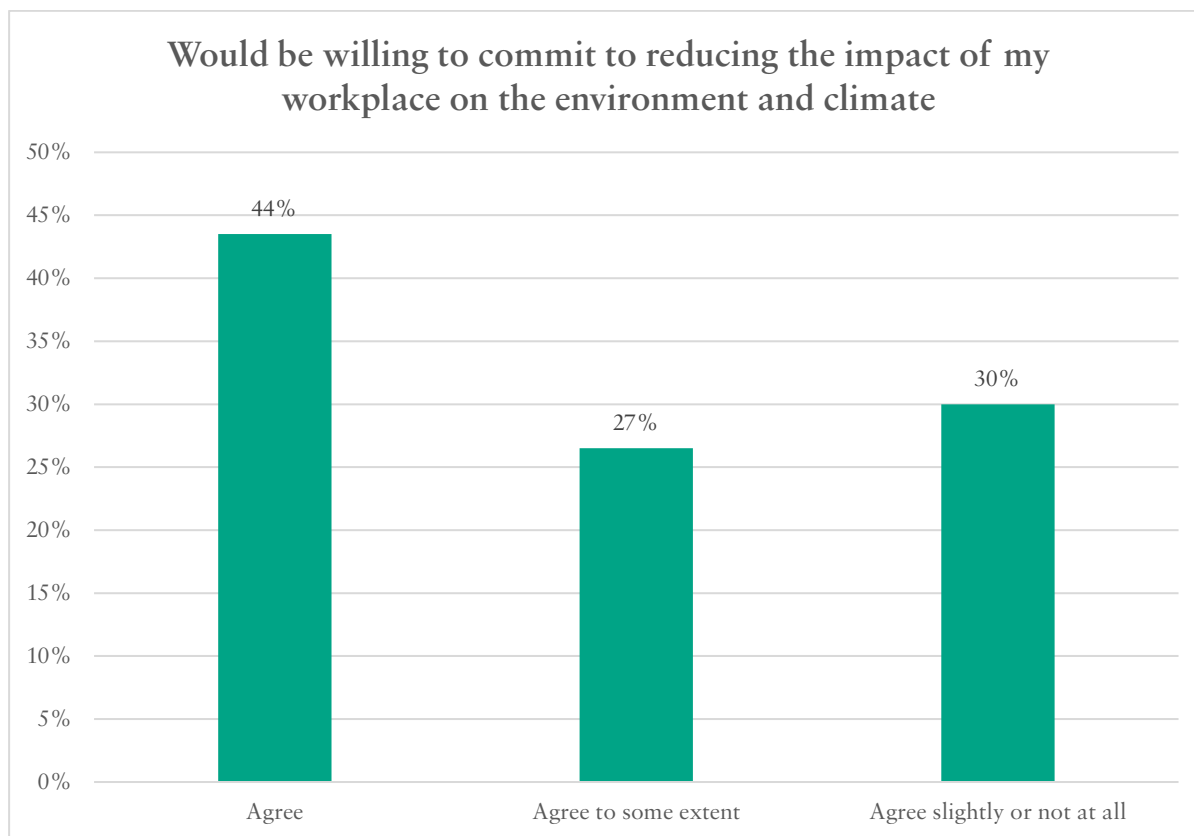
As issues related to working conditions and skills development are high on the agenda, it is logical that the trade union is the path to increased influence that the largest proportion of employees think is most effective (44 per cent). 35 per cent believe that forums offered by the company could be the most effective channel, but the problem is that often such forums do not exist. There, the trade union could contribute to their creation, which means that the trade union can also play an important role in this context (Briland Rosenström & Sundqvist, 2022).

### What kind of advocacy do you think can most increase employees' influence over the company's environmental work?



Many employees believe that the trade union can play a role in increasing employee influence, and it also turns out that there is in fact an interest in organised involvement in environmental and climate issues at the workplace.



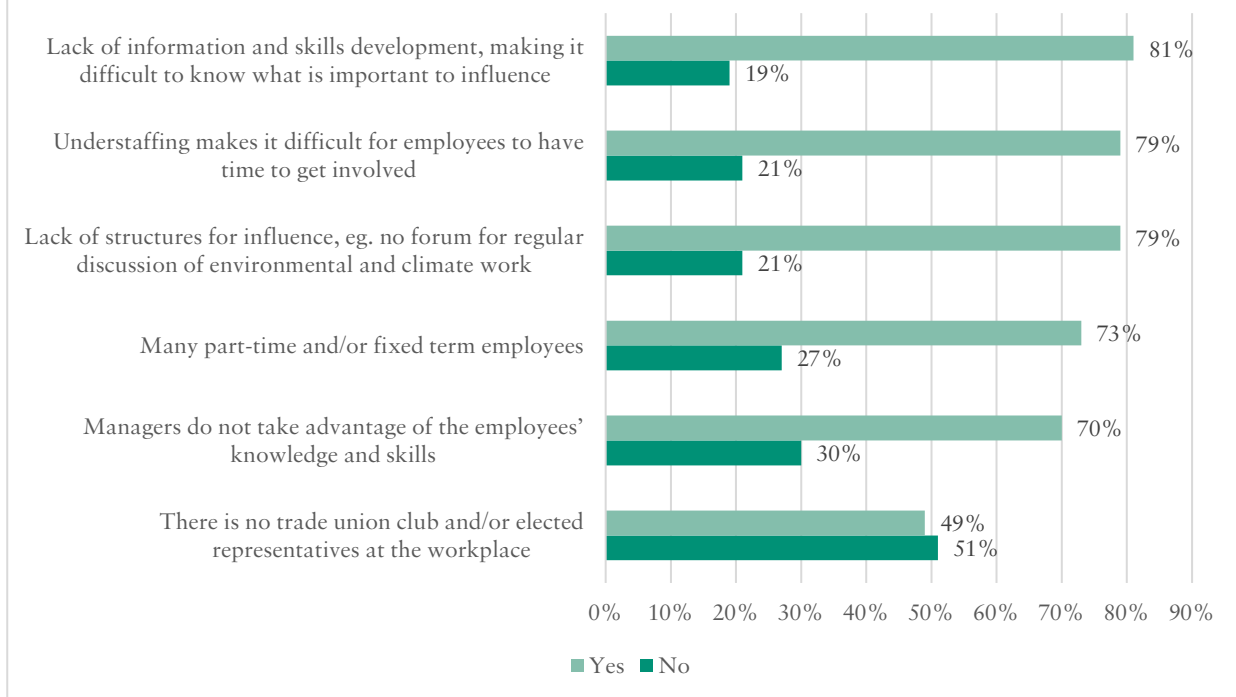


Nearly 70 per cent of the members are willing to engage in environmental and climate issues at the workplace (Briland Rosenström & Palmgren, 2020). This provides the conditions for creating trade union organisations linked to the environment and climate at workplaces. The results also suggest that the environment and climate could be a way into trade union engagement.

#### **4.4 Obstacles to employees' opportunities for influence**

However, the fact that there is a willingness to influence and an interest in engaging does not mean that the path to influence is wide open. There are obvious obstacles and these obstacles often turn out to be circumstances that trade unions are constantly struggling to eliminate, such as precarious employment (73 per cent), under-staffing (79 per cent) and shortcomings in skills development (81 per cent) (Briland Rosenström & Sundqvist, 2022).

## Obstacles to employees' influence on environmental and climate issues



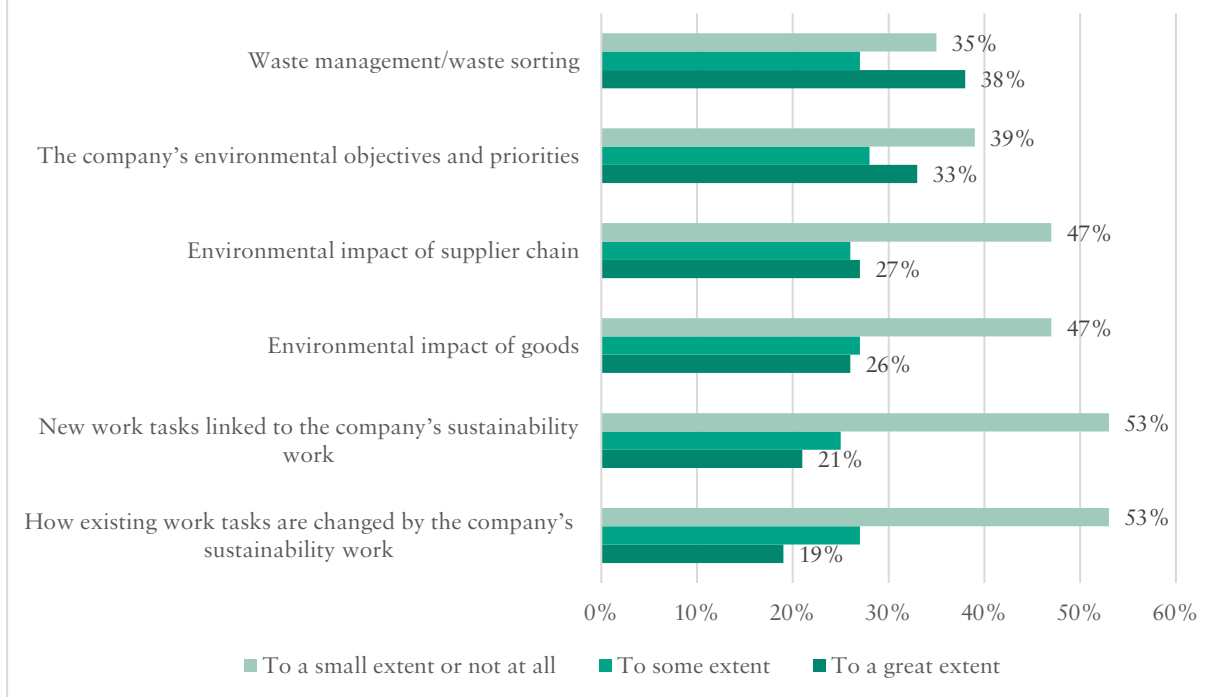
We now see a vicious circle. There are shortcomings in terms of working conditions, work environment and skills development that make it difficult to be able or have time to get involved in the environmental and climate transition, and when employees are not involved in the transition, there is in turn a risk of worsened conditions and skills development. Thus, traditional trade union work must take place in parallel with the work for increased influence on environmental issues.

### Shortcomings in skills development

Better skills development with regard to the environment and climate is what most employees would like to work for if they had more influence. Inadequate skills development is also perceived by a large proportion as an obstacle to influence. This makes it interesting to take a closer look at what is lacking in skills development.

To begin with, we can note that there are opportunities for improvement in a wide range of areas. Few employees receive adequate training in logistics and many see shortcomings in the training they receive on the environmental impact of their own goods. However, what stands out most are shortcomings in training when the work changes as a result of the environmental and climate transition. More than half consider that there is a complete lack of training both as regards managing changes to existing tasks and how to perform new tasks. Only about 20 per cent consider that such skills-enhancing initiatives exist to a large extent (Briland Rosenström & Sundqvist 2022).

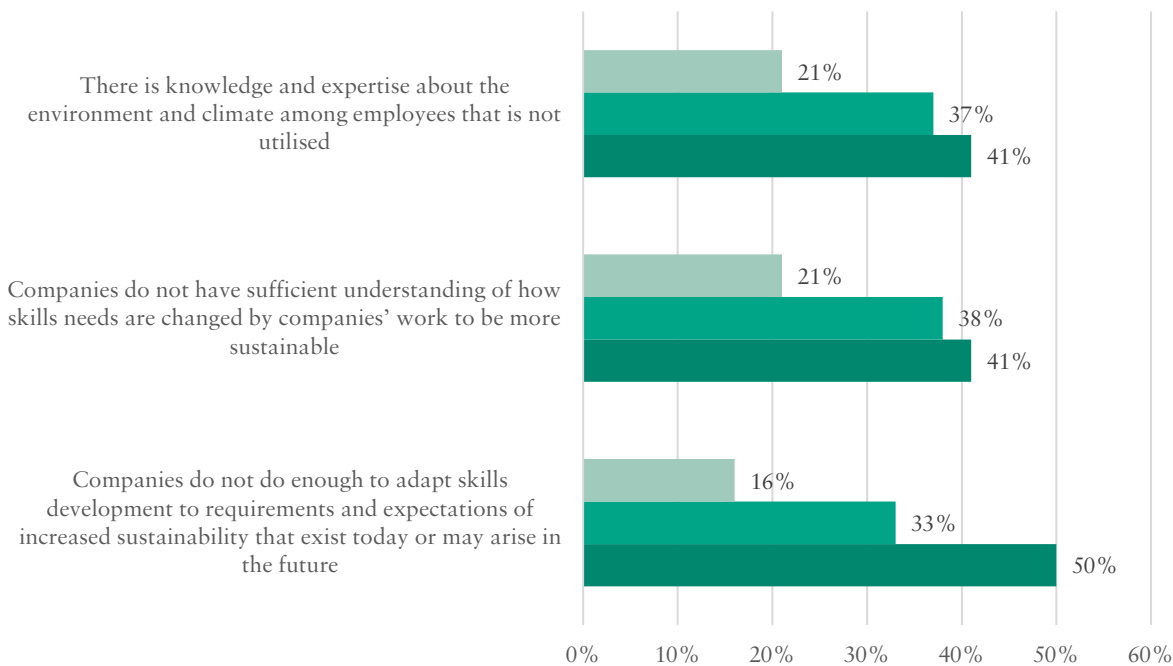
### To what extent are the following areas of skills development included at the company you work for?



Shortcomings in training to perform tasks as they change are concerning for the future because the pace of change will hardly slow down. According to the respondents, the shortcomings are due to the fact that companies often lack an adequate understanding of the skills required by the transition and therefore do not do enough to adapt skills development to new requirements. About 80 per cent see this chain of shortcomings (Briland Rosenström & Sundqvist, 2022).

## Shortcomings in skills development linked to sustainability

■ Agree slightly or not at all   ■ Agree to some extent   ■ Agree to a great extent



As we can see in the table, companies are often considered to fall short when it comes to using the existing environmental and climate skills of their employees. There, companies miss out on an important resource that could probably have been better used if understanding of what the transition requires was greater.

In summary, we can note that company managements themselves need to undergo more training, adapt skills development better to staff according to how the industry changes and map the skills that exist in the company. This would improve conditions for staff, but it would also benefit companies' competitiveness. The trade union has an opportunity to contribute to all this, both through pressure on employers and possibly through cooperation with employers' organisations as they are interested in their member companies being competitive.

### 4.5 Summary

Surveys we have made of how our members view the environment and climate have shown a great interest and a willingness to engage. They want to engage in environmental and climate issues to save the climate, but also to ensure that environmental and social sustainability go hand in hand in companies' transition. Members see an obvious risk that changes made by companies in order to become more environmentally sustainable could adversely affect the members themselves. Consequently, many want to get involved in how the company works with environmental sustainability, but are often hindered by factors related to shortcomings in working conditions and the work environment. Inadequate skills development is the most distinctive obstacle. All this points to the fact that the trade union has an important role to play in the workplace. The trade union can act as a guarantor to ensure that the transition does not worsen working conditions, that employees have an influence and that companies provide employees with the skills they need in the climate transition.

## **Kapitel 5. What should the trade union do? Members' views on the trade union's role in the environmental and climate transition**

Many of our survey findings have indicated that our members perceive the environment and climate as a trade union issue that our trade union should work on. There is a commitment to reduce the industry's environmental and climate impact, but the members also see a connection between the environmental and climate transition and changes in working conditions and work environments. Employees also express a need for improved skills development and want increased influence.

All this indicates that our members want to see the trade union working on environmental and climate issues in several ways. But how? To find out, we have asked what they think Handels should work with in environmental and climate issues and which trade union areas should be involved.

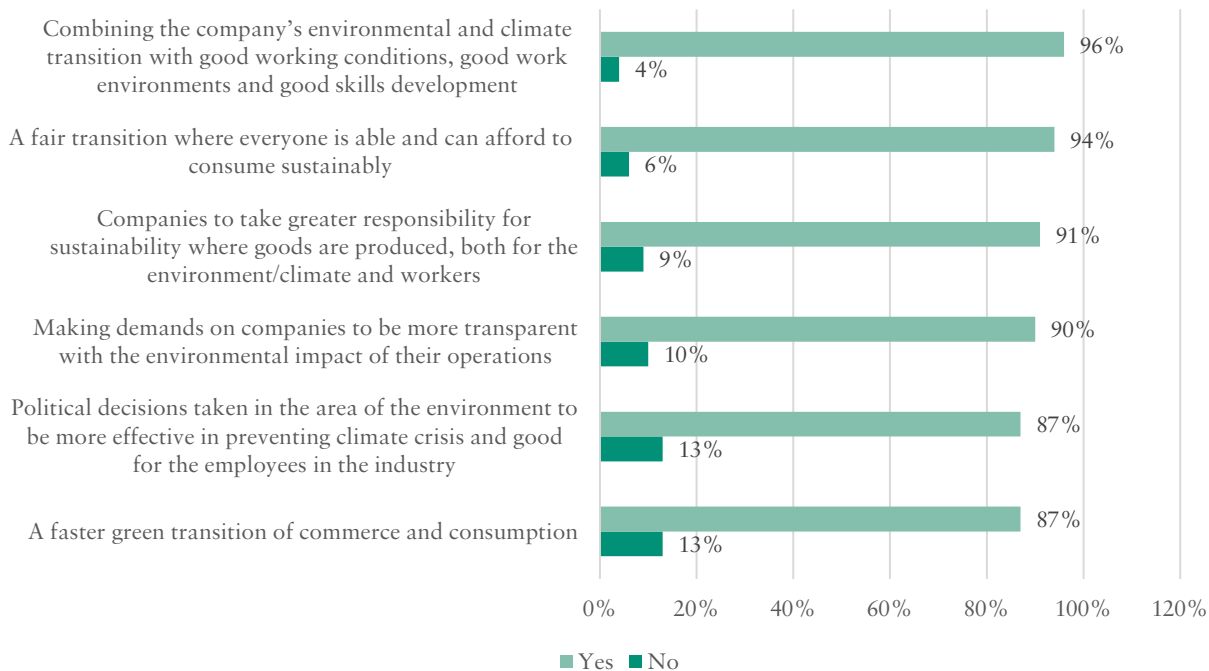
The aim of the questions has been to understand if and how members consider the environment and climate to be a trade union issue in order to start integrating environmental and climate aspects into different parts of trade union activities. Such background knowledge improves the chances of taking successful initiatives leading to increased trade union strength.

### **5.1 What aspects should the trade union work on in the climate transition?**

We have wanted to ensure that Handels' future work will be based on questions and goals that really have support among the members. To get guidance on how Handels should continue to focus its work on environmental and climate issues, we asked what members want us to work for. For example, it would not be a given that the members want the trade union to devote itself to making demands on policies to influence the climate transition. If there is no mandate, extra consideration should be given as to whether it is a matter for Handels.

However, our study has shown that there is strong support for Handels' to work on environmental and climate issues from all the angles we have found reasonable and possible from a trade union perspective, as shown in the table below (Briland Rosenström & Sundqvist, 2022).

## What should Handels work for, linked to the environment and climate?



The diagram shows that the proportion who do not want Handels to work on environmental and climate issues is very small, less than four per cent. It is also clear that an overwhelming majority believe that Handels' work on the environmental and climate transition should be combined with good working conditions, good work environments and good skills development. Once again, we clearly see the importance of the transition not taking place at all costs, but, on the contrary, being based on solidarity and fairness. The different aspects of work on the environment and climate that our members would like to see are discussed below.

- **Good working conditions, good work environment when the industry adapts**

Almost all respondents, 96 per cent, believe that Handels should promote a climate transition that is compatible with good working conditions, good work environments and adequate skills development for employees. This confirms that those who responded to the survey link the transition to their own everyday life based on the knowledge that it can be changed by the climate transition in the industry. It is of the highest priority for employees that Handels both reacts to and shapes the transition that takes place in order to ensure good conditions and a good work environment.

- **Just transition**

A very large proportion, 94 per cent, agree that Handels should promote a shift in consumption that everyone can participate in and can afford. This means that Handels should influence policies to achieve a just transition, which leaves no one on the sidelines. Working towards the introduction of environmental policy instruments that give everyone good opportunities for transition is part of this. But it is also about the overall distribution of income and wealth in society. Overall economic inequalities also create unequal opportunities to consume more sustainably.

- **Increased sustainability for the environment and workers in producing countries**  
More than 90 per cent consider that Handels should also work for increased sustainability where goods are produced. Part of this is environmental sustainability. But it is also about solidarity with workers in other countries who often perform work under poor conditions, in unhealthy environments and with the risk of themselves being directly affected by the harmful effects of production. Members want Handels to help make the situation better for vulnerable workers in other countries by influencing companies in commerce to take responsibility.
- **Political advocacy to speed up the transition**  
87 per cent of respondents want Handels to work for a faster climate transition of the industry and consumption. Such a high percentage of positives is not a given. One might think that the environment and climate are important issues, but that it is not the trade union's task to engage in policy issues in this area. However, the results show that a clear majority sees the climate situation as so serious that Handels needs to be proactive and contribute solutions to industry and policy.

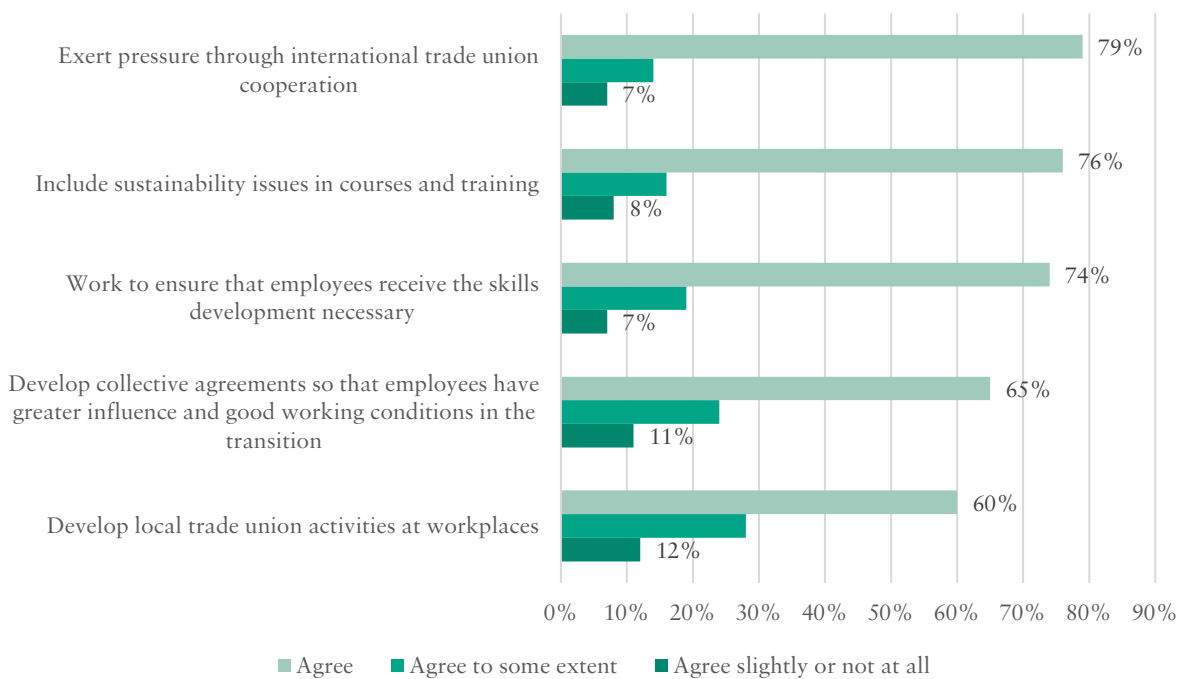
The different expectations expressed by the members in terms of Handels' commitment to environmental and climate issues are not at all incompatible. But they require the ability to hold several thoughts simultaneously. Handels members want the trade union to influence policy on environmental issues, but not lose focus on the core issue: to create a transition where employees work under good conditions and a good work environment. They want Handels to promote this for employees in Swedish commerce, but at the same time see a need for solidarity with vulnerable workers in other countries' production. But it is not just their own situation or the situation of workers in other countries that the members think about. There is also an overarching dimension of justice and equality that expresses itself in the desire for Handels to work towards a shift in consumption that means everyone can afford to adapt.

In addition to pointing out areas where the trade union should be involved, the results also support Handels working from a classic trade union perspective. At the beginning of the report, a trade union perspective on the environment and climate was established on the basis of how it can be reasonable from a trade union point of view to look at these issues. The results of the survey show that the members want to see work that is consistent with trade union core values. Rights, security, justice and solidarity are at the forefront.

## **5.2 In which areas of activity should the trade union work on environmental and climate issues?**

With such a broad desire for trade union engagement in environmental and climate issues, it would be reasonable if the members of our trade union want environmental and climate aspects to be integrated into many different parts of Handels' activities. The study shows that this is the case. Thus, our members feel that there are relevant environmental and climate aspects in all types of activities that our trade union engages in.

## Handels should do the following with regard to the environment and climate?



Those who responded to the survey want environmental and climate work that involves and affects all kinds of work in the trade union. In all of the fields of activity mentioned, environmental and climate elements are called for by at least 88 per cent (Briland Rosenström & Sundqvist, 2022). The members therefore believe that the environment and climate should be part of the activities in everything from local trade union organisation to international trade union work. That local trade union organisation is important for members is also shown by the answers to a question we asked about whether there should be an active trade union member at the workplace that has a clear responsibility for environmental and climate issues. 81 per cent believe there is such a need.

The conclusion is that the whole of Handels is needed in the work linked to the environment and climate, so that the members' hopes of what the trade union will do can be fulfilled. Ultimately, it is a consequence of the fact that they see the environment and climate as more than a separate issue. For them, the environmental issue goes into everyday life, into their skills needs, into their conditions and into greater aspects of justice. The environmental and climate transition does not therefore change any fundamental trade union values or targets. Handels should continue to be an organisation that revolves around work for justice, equality, good working conditions, secure jobs, good work environment and functioning skills supply, but based on knowledge about and taking into account what the environmental and climate transition can mean and with the aim of shaping the transition instead of handing over power over the transition to others.



## **5.3 Summary**

Studies have shown that Handels' members want to see work on a broad front on environmental and climate issues involving the entire trade union. Since members' work and everyday life are affected by the environmental and climate transition, the environment and climate are an aspect that goes into all forms of trade union work.

Our mapping of members' views will in future form the basis for work to integrate environmental and climate aspects into all forms of trade union activities. Our survey of members' attitudes also gives a mandate for this. This does not have to be the case in all trade union contexts. Therefore, it is important for each trade union to investigate its own members' views on the role of the trade union.

## **Kapitel 6. Plans and visions for trade union work on environmental and climate issues**

Our trade union now has knowledge that can form the basis of continued trade union work in the field of the environment and climate. Our major challenge for the future is to integrate environmental and climate issues into different parts of our activities using that knowledge. In some areas, such as political advocacy, we have ongoing work that needs to continue to evolve. In other areas, such as trade union organisation linked to the environment and climate in workplaces, Handels is at the starting line. At the moment, possible measures are being discussed and inventoried in all areas to formulate a strategy.

Our conclusions so far in this discussion are summarised in this chapter. It is thus not a key for what to do, but a map of opportunities that hopefully can inspire other trade unions that want to start or develop trade union work linked to environmental and climate issues. The chapter consists of the two parts “Trade union work within the country’s borders” and “International cooperation”.

### **6.1 Trade union work within the country’s borders**

#### **6.1.1 Handels’ direction of travel**

Through the surveys we have conducted and the reports we have written, we within Handels have a wealth of information on which to base trade union work on environmental and climate issues. We know what environmental and climate challenges our industry is facing and will face. We also have knowledge of how our members view the environmental and climate impact of the industry, what influence they wish to have over their company’s and industry’s environmental and climate impact, and how they view the trade union’s role in the environmental and climate transition.

All in all, this gives us a direction where there is no doubt that the trade union movement needs to be part of a just climate transition. But what should be do specifically? A number of trade unions, both in Sweden and in other countries, have already started work towards a just transition. Based on these experiences and the facts that have emerged in Handels’ own reports, we can identify a choice of directions that Handels can take in the near future.

However, it is important that in future considerations Handels ensures that environmental and climate issues are not treated as a special interest or become an issue that competes with other basic trade union activities. Previous member surveys clearly show that members do not want the environmental and climate issue to be a pretext for making working conditions and the work environment worse or for overshadowing other activities. It is therefore important that the environment and climate be integrated into existing structures and working methods in parallel with other basic trade union issues.

#### **6.1.2 Selection of visions and ideas that Handels is considering and exploring further**

- Education

For more than a year Handels has been part of a collaboration with other parts of civil society on an education project on environmental and climate issues. Led by the think tank Global Challenge, among others, a study circle format has been developed for discussion on the climate, training sessions for future climate ambassadors and an online course. The goal is for climate ambassadors to feel equipped to start conversation groups and other activities that contribute to a just transition in the workplace.

Handels is currently working to see how this can fit into existing structures and to review the course and training material to suit our workplaces. The intention is that the work will *strengthen* the trade union organisation at workplaces where the local union and their representatives are involved in the work — not competing with it.

- **Green safety representatives/Climate representatives**

Trade union climate representatives originally come from the British system of Green Reps, i.e. a trade union elected position similar to safety representatives, for example. However, the Green Reps in the UK do not have the same legal status as other trade union elected positions. Green reps are tasked with raising awareness about environmental and climate issues, keeping contact with the environmental industry on matters that should be raised with management, active trade union environmental work, reviewing the workplace from an environmental perspective, participating in developing sustainable practices and networking with other green reps (Rolfer, Bengt. 2020, p. 28 and the Vision magazine, 23 September 2022).

The city of Yorkshire in England is located in a region marked by a long and conflict-torn history of closures, strikes and betrayed workers when the mines were closed, and the steel mill closed in the 1980s. Despite this, the region still houses many emission-heavy industries. There a project has been ongoing for a few years with Green Reps and a training programme including a course on just transition. The start was when the UK was the first country in the world to decide on zero fossil fuel emissions by 2050. The hope is that the Green Reps will be able to exert trade union influence in the upcoming process towards a fossil-free working life.

For inspiration on what Green Reps at workplaces can accomplish, the national federation of trade unions in England and Wales, the Trades Union Congress (TUC) has published a report called Cutting carbon, growing skills — green skills for a just transition (Rolfer, Bengt 2020, p. 28).

In the spring of 2022, the Swedish trade union Vision was the first to introduce the role of climate representative in Sweden. The climate representative is a way to create space in the trade union remit to channel the commitment that exists at Vision's workplaces to the environment and climate. For that reason, they have launched online training for climate representatives and an "Action Map" that aims to inspire others to act climate-smart in the workplace.

In addition, Vision has specified the duties of the climate representative, such as identifying which sustainability issues colleagues consider important, taking initiatives to influence the workplace, supporting with knowledge in relevant interest negotiations and supporting the national executive committee ahead of collaboration and negotiation on climate issues. In concrete terms, it may be a matter of negotiating compensation for those who choose climate smart travel to get to work, giving those who work with purchasing and procurement the right skills development and conditions to enable climate smart and sustainable procurement, to introduce company bicycles, to influence what fuel is used by company vehicles or to have the environment and climate as a standing item at the regular workplace meetings (vision.se 23 September 2022).

Based on inspiration from other actors' implementation, Handels is now exploring the possibility of launching their own system of climate representatives. However, if we are to introduce climate representatives, we must be able to ensure that the role can serve as a good complement to the existing trade union structure. The role must neither compete with nor be decoupled from structures such as local trade unions in workplaces. Since there is also great potential in including environmental and climate aspects in

the work of local unions and terms of reference for elected representatives, their introduction requires a conviction that the role of climate representative adds value to our particular trade union.

- **Green collective agreements**

Green collective agreements or green clauses in collective agreements are about trade unions and employers agreeing on measures aimed at reducing the negative climate footprint of the company, the workplace and the worker.

As early as in the 1970s Canada began introducing green clauses into collective agreements between trade unions and employers. A research project at York University in Canada has compiled all green collective agreement clauses agreed between trade unions and employers (around 300) from the start in Canada of green collective agreements in the 1970s up to 2021. Examples of wordings are that the company and trade union undertake to work together to reduce emissions, protect employees' health from environmentally harmful substances and hold regular meetings to evaluate and discuss environmental, recycling and energy issues (York University, 2021, pp. 3-4). Another interesting formulation is that, in connection with the international environment and climate initiative Earth Hour at the end of March, at eight o'clock in the evening, employees should turn off lamps at home and in the workplace to highlight the role of each individual in halting climate change (York University, 2021 p. 5).

A few years ago, the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) in the city of Ottawa, Canada, succeeded in negotiating compensation from the employer of a certain amount per kilometre to employees travelling to work by bicycle. In the city of Calgary, the same union managed to sign collective agreements for all 18 public libraries in the city to adopt a recycling programme for waste and packaging reduction, and to use only environmentally friendly cleaning and cleansing products (Canadian Union of Public Employees, 2018)

- **Green skills development**

In Handels 2022 environment and climate report "How employees can contribute to environmental and climate transition in commerce", 83 per cent of respondents considered that companies are not doing enough to adapt skills development to requirements and expectations for sustainability that exist today or that may arise in the future. 79 per cent also thought that companies lacked an understanding of how skills needs are changed by companies' work to become more sustainable. In addition, 78 per cent believed that employers do not take advantage of the knowledge and skills available in environmental and climate matters. From this, we concluded that companies need to identify the skills that exist in the company regarding the environment and climate, but also investigate how they can meet society's increased demands for sustainability by offering employees skills development (Briland Rosenström & Sundqvist, 2022, pp. 23-24).

The survey shows that the members want to be able to inform customers about the environmental impact of goods, assess the quality and lifespan of goods, gain knowledge of repairing and/or reworking goods, and be able to value and price used goods. Half of the members surveyed believe it will become even more important in the future to be able to inform customers about the climate impact of goods. This strengthens the understanding that skills development is needed to contribute to the environmental and climate transition and here a majority state that they want skills development through the job and at the workplace. However, 76 per cent state that it is difficult to find working time to obtain information on the sustainability of goods, while 59 per cent say it is difficult to find relevant information on the sustainability of goods.

In order for commerce to change, the employer must therefore provide resources and conditions for skills development of employees at the workplace. There is already some cooperation with the industry's joint interest organisation the Swedish Retail and Wholesale Council and the employers' organisation the Swedish Trade Federation on the transition to sustainable jobs of the future and changes in occupational roles. The Swedish Retail and Wholesale Council has a special committee dealing with skills issues in which transition linked to sustainability work will be more prominent. Discussions specifically on this issue have been initiated. The parties may also work together within broader platforms that also include academic research. The ReSkills project is an example of this. In this, the social partners are jointly involved in developing training that raises skills in the transition of commerce in the area of clothing and textiles.

- **Working together with companies that want to set a green example**

One way Handels could boost environmental and climate work at workplace level is through working together with companies interested in sustainability that want to take a lead in sustainability issues and act as role models for other companies. This would aim to spread good practices to other parts of the industry and thus create a more extensive transition of commerce.

There are already a number of examples of companies in commerce that in many ways are pioneers of circular and sustainable business models that could be spread to other companies in the industry. Clas Ohlson is a company founded in Sweden just over a hundred years ago, which today also operates in Norway and Finland. The company aims to be completely climate neutral and completely circular by 2045 (Clasohlson.se, 17 September 2022.)

At one of Clas Ohlson's stores in Väla, Helsingborg, management and staff work together, for example with an internal Facebook group where the group members can put in ideas on how to improve the company's environmental and climate work in different ways. An improvement came when the staff commented on the fact that each product was separately packaged in plastic, and then put in a larger bag and then in a large carton. By drawing attention to the unnecessary packaging, the staff eliminated hundreds of thousands of unnecessary plastic packages. The staff also noted the need to rent instead of sell. Consequently, Clas Ohlson now rents out machines that are used infrequently in a home and that customers therefore do not have to own themselves. These range from carpet cleaners to drill hammers. The local union has also ensured that the employees have received training and knowledge about the products they rent out to customers. (Swedish Commercial Workers Union, film from congress 2021).

## **6.2 International collaboration**

Handels members want the union to work for a transition where employees in Sweden have good conditions and a good working environment. They also believe that the environment and climate should be part of all activities — in everything from local trade union organisation to international trade union work. For example, members want the trade union to help make the situation better for vulnerable workers in other countries by influencing companies in commerce to take responsibility. The threat of climate change requires collective action — both within the framework of the nation state and through international cooperation. A real obstacle to a just transition is weak trade unions, and it is important that climate action does not overshadow work on core trade union issues. A just transition requires workers to be represented through their own democratic organisations. Therefore, our continued support to other trade unions' organisation of members and collective bargaining, gender equality and internal democracy is important.

UNI Global Union is an important actor in our international collaboration. UNI is the global union federation (often abbreviated as the GUF) which organises trade unions in the services sector and represents over 20 million workers in 150 countries. Within UNI, affiliated unions collaborate at global and regional levels. The organisation is also divided into about ten sectors where commerce is the largest sector. Much of our international work is carried out within and through UNI Global Union's commerce sector — and that collaboration is important to reduce the commerce industry's climate impact globally.

In uncertain times there is an imminent risk that nation states will close themselves off. An important task for Handels is to counteract such a development: we need a just transition that is global and characterised by cross-border solidarity. Handels' climate work cannot be limited to Sweden's borders, it must also inform our international commitment — and it can be done in different ways. A selection of possible tools and working methods to develop our international work on environmental and climate issues is discussed below.

### **6.2.1 Trade union development projects**

An important part of Handels' international solidarity work is our development cooperation with trade unions in low- and middle-income countries, which is part-financed by central government development assistance funds. Handels' projects are primarily about strengthening organisation, educating members about trade union rights and collective bargaining, and supporting advocacy. Just transition requires strong, representative trade unions and a functioning social dialogue - in that way the union's development project contributes indirectly to securing workers' influence over the climate transition.

The union's development work is also an opportunity to work more concretely on environmental and climate issues. Since 2021, Handels has been running a thematic sponsorship programme focusing on just transition in the Philippines, a country where democracy is declining. The climate crisis is already affecting the most vulnerable sections of the population and civil society needs all the support they can get in the coming work. The programme is primarily aimed at Handels' Branches, with the stated aim of creating opportunities for cooperation and exchanges between our elected representatives and trade unionists in other countries. The exchange is important to highlight the value of our solidarity work among members and elected representatives. It also creates an in-depth understanding of the impacts of climate change in different countries. Through the sponsorship programme, the trade union supports transport workers who, through trade union negotiations and advocacy work, have ensured the security of their members in the transition to green transport. Another partner organisation represents workers in the fishing industry and works for sustainable fishing and to prevent dangerous emissions from mines to water. The trade unions work in different industries, but the partnership is a chance to learn from each other's experiences. What negotiation and advocacy strategies have worked? And how can we best support the work of our sister trade union? These are questions that Handels wants to explore within the sponsorship program.

The effects of a changed climate will have a severe impact on workers in low- and middle-income countries who already now have the least resources, and who thus have the least favourable chances of adapting to changing conditions of life. Handels must continue to work towards a solidarity-based development cooperation policy that invests in trade union development. Not least in order to address the urgent climate threat through a just transition. The thematic sponsorship program is the start of Handels' work and exchange with workers in other countries on environmental and climate issues.

### **6.2.2 Multinational companies**

Influencing multinationals to become more sustainable is central to reducing the negative impact of the commerce sector on the environment and within the UNI Global Union, work with multinational companies plays a prominent role. This includes signing global framework agreements that establish

minimum conditions for employees in all countries, but also improving the situation of workers in the production chain. There are tools and forms of cooperation here that could also be used in the work on the just transition and a reduced climate impact within commerce.

### **Global framework agreements**

Since the 1970s, global framework agreements have been signed between global federations and multinational companies, in an effort to strengthen social dialogue and ensure fundamental rights for companies' own employees and workers in the production chain. The agreements are partly an attempt to remedy shortcomings in national legislation and non-binding international principles, but also a response to companies' internal corporate social responsibility (CSR) work. The global agreements establish minimum rules that must always be met within a group of companies, regardless of the country in which the business is conducted. The agreements often contain clauses concerning subcontractors. The content of the global agreements varies, but in principle all agreements contain commitments to respect the four fundamental principles and rights at work as declared by the ILO, a UN agency. These are: prohibition of child labour, forced labour and discrimination and the right to freedom of association and collective bargaining. Many agreements go beyond that and also regulate trade union work, the work environment and working hours — but also include clauses related to the company's environmental sustainability, referring among other things to the UN Global Compact and the ILO guidelines for a just transition.

Handels participates in the negotiations when a global agreement is to be reached between UNI Global Union and a Swedish commerce company. Handels works to get more Swedish multinational companies to sign global framework agreements, but we can also work to influence the content. Global agreements can establish minimum levels and joint rules for a just transition. With clauses that require internal procedures and working methods, skills development and other measures, global agreements have the potential to become important tools in the transition. Global framework agreements also include mechanisms for implementation and compliance. Here there are also structures and bodies to evaluate joint environmental work. Compliance with and effectiveness of the agreements depend largely on the consensus and cooperation of the parties. In a constructive collaboration between GUF and companies, there is also the potential to develop cooperation with companies that are particularly profiled in sustainability issues, for example by spreading good working methods to other countries where the company operates.

### **Sustainable supply chains**

More than 90 per cent of Handels' members consider that we should work towards increased sustainability where goods are produced. This is about solidarity with workers in other countries who often perform work under poor conditions, in unhealthy environments and with the risk of themselves being directly affected by the harmful effects of production. The work on sustainable supply chains is challenging and there are still major shortcomings in social sustainability. Violations of workers' rights are commonplace and local trade union influence is weak. At the same time, improvements are being made. UNI Global Union is one of the signatories of the historic Bangladesh Accord on Fire and Building Safety in Bangladesh, which came into force in 2013, shortly after more than 1,000 textile workers lost their lives when the Rana Plaza factory collapsed. The Accord was made between hundreds of fashion companies, UNI Global Union and IndustriALL, as well as trade unions in Bangladesh. In 2021, a new agreement was reached between the parties. The new security agreement means that unions are given insight into the work environment at factories in Bangladesh and an obligation for large companies to create a safer work environment. But the new agreement regulates not only fire and building safety, but also the general work environment. There is

also a stated ambition that the agreement should be able to include more countries in due course. The agreement has resulted in a safer work environment for many workers.

Like the global framework agreements, the security agreement can provide a model for how global and local unions can collaborate with companies to change and improve conditions and working methods at industry level. In this way, the agreement can inspire a joint effort for industry transformation that will require support for workers in the production chain. This may involve skills development, training, or compensation in the event of unemployment. Dialogue with workers is crucial for a just transition designed to meet both environmental and social challenges.

### **6.2.3 European collaboration**

The climate transition is a key and priority issue for EU decision-making institutions. The European Green Deal was presented by the European Commission in December 2019 and has given new impetus to climate policy and action at EU level. The Green Deal is a package of proposals to adapt EU climate, energy, transport and tax policies to reduce net greenhouse gas emissions by at least 55 per cent by 2030 compared to 1990 levels. With the Green Deal, the EU will shift to a modern, resource-efficient and competitive economy. But one of the main objectives of the initiative is to leave no person or society behind — transition should be just. One tool is the Just Transition Mechanism that provides targeted support to regions, industries and workers most affected by the transition.

Another Green Deal initiative is the European Commission's proposal for a directive on corporate sustainability due diligence or supplier due diligence. The proposal establishes an obligation for companies to respect human rights and environmental impacts in their operations and supply chain and a process to manage risks and negative impacts. Workers and their trade unions play a central role here.

For Handels, it is important to secure the workers' voice in the transition through our trade union federations: the initiatives presented should benefit from — and strengthen — the existing trade union structures for co-determination and influence, not least at national level. But also at EU level, interaction between workers' representatives and companies has an important role to play in environmental and climate work.

#### **European Works Councils**

In companies operating in several EU and EEA countries, it is possible to set up a European Works Council (EWC). There, workers from different countries — mainly within Europe — can get information and consult employers' representatives on decisions that affect and have consequences for workers across national borders. Under the Swedish Act on European Works Councils (Swedish Code of Statutes SFS 2011:427), the Council is entitled, among other things, to information on the expected development of the activities, production and sales of the Community-scale undertaking or group of undertakings. The undertaking shall also consult the Works Council on matters relating to the employment situation and its expected development, the introduction of new working methods or production processes and production transfers. The fact that current legislation does not mention companies' sustainability work is not an obstacle to raising the subject within the Works Council. The Council's influence and working methods are governed by a specific agreement between the undertaking/company and the workers.

By including the company's work with social sustainability as well as the environment and climate in the information and consultation process, multinational companies could benefit from the knowledge and skills of workers in different countries. Local and national approaches to environmental issues — in stores, warehouses and offices — can inspire new procedures in other parts of the business. In this way, Works



Councils can be an important tool in the transition at company level. Here, employee representatives and EWC coordinators can be active and driving forces.

### **Social dialogue in commerce**

The transition in the commerce industry also requires active partners at EU level. The dialogue between the social partners — social dialogue — is a cornerstone of the European social model. It enables the social partners to actively contribute to the shaping of European social and employment policies, including through agreements. UNI Europa Commerce has just started a two-year EU project funded by the European Commission's programme for sectoral relations and social dialogue. The aim of the project is to develop social dialogue to better respond to the green and digital transitions in commerce.

Together with the European affiliates, UNI Europa Commerce will explore how the transition can bring benefits to both employers and workers — for example through increased productivity, new jobs and better conditions. But this presupposes that employers and trade unions are well aware of the risks and opportunities of the transition. One goal of the project is to develop tools and working methods to manage the transition in collaboration between trade unions and employers. The steering group includes representatives from Handels but also from trade unions in Italy, the Netherlands and Hungary. The conditions for social dialogue and trade union work differ significantly between the four countries — an important aspect to take into account in the work of finding relevant ways of working.

This type of knowledge-enhancing project is important because it provides trade unions and their elected representatives with concrete tools in the work on environmental and climate issues. But it can also strengthen joint work both nationally and at European level. The project will also be involved in the commercial sector's social dialogue at EU level. Interaction between the parties within the industry — at national and European level — is crucial in responding to the necessary changes and finding common solutions based on the specific needs of the commerce sector.

## **6.3 Final discussion**

Several of the ideas introduced here, which draw inspiration from what other trade unions have done to raise the pace of the climate transition, are applicable to the Swedish Commercial Workers Union. Several ideas are also mutually enabling and are thus connected, such as the introduction of green safety representatives who can drive both green skills development and green clauses in the local collective agreement.

In short, there is a lot to do for the environment and climate within the framework of the Swedish industrial relations model and Swedish labour market legislation. In addition to the issue of skills development, together we can maintain a social dialogue on how to create environmental sustainability in working life.

The work should not be limited to Sweden, but also inform the trade union's international commitment. There are already areas of cooperation and tools at regional and global level that may be useful in reducing the environmental impact of the commerce sector and making a truly just transition possible from a global perspective.

If sustainability in working life can also integrate the green perspective, without becoming a special interest, the likelihood is increased of society achieving the large-scale and just transition that is essential to enable us to meet the Agenda 2030's Sustainable Development Goals and the goal of the Paris Agreement of keeping global warming below two degrees.

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# Appendix

## Proposed measures in the Environmental and Climate Policy Programme of the Swedish Commercial Workers Union

### 6.4 The role of employees in the transition

#### Changes in the industry

- Ensure that more employees receive skills development that enables better and more conscious sustainability work in the industry, companies and workplaces.
- Take into account issues of ecological sustainability in joint work and negotiations, both centrally and locally.
- Develop forms of engagement in sustainability issues in the workplace for employees.

### 6.5 Targets and measures for changed consumption

#### Political changes

- Revise the target for Sweden to reach zero emissions by 2045 to 2035 at the latest.
- Introduce a national target for reducing consumption-based emissions. This should be designed as a milestone target towards climate neutrality also from a consumption perspective.
- Make it mandatory to declare the total environmental and climate impact of products.
- Introduce threshold values for the environmental impact of different products. It is necessary to investigate which product categories should primarily be covered by the scheme and how it can be practicable.
- At EU level, introduce climate tariffs or border tax adjustments based on the climate footprint of imported goods in order to smooth out the cost of emissions independently of the country of origin's climate legislation.
- Strengthen legal requirements for producers to take responsibility for sustainability throughout the production and supply chain.
- Explore the possibility of introducing a system of environmental and climate pots for consumers.
- Ensure environmental sustainability in public procurement and purchasing.

#### Changes in the industry

- Work towards a more sustainable view of consumption and change in consumption standards that mean rapid turnover of large volumes of new goods. Profitability and customer loyalty instead need to be built on sustainable goods, repair services, second-hand sales and rental operations.
- Develop working methods for companies to better communicate the environmental impact of their products, and how it can be minimised.

## **6.6 Measures for a circular economy**

### **Political changes**

- Reduce VAT on commercial second-hand sales.
- Introduce subsidies aimed at rental operations, for example in the form of a right of deduction on rental charges or lower VAT on rentals.
- Introduce deposit systems for more products.
- Ban the planned obsolescence of durable consumer goods.
- Require life expectancy labelling of durable consumer goods, as well as a lifetime warranty.
- Introduce a ban on companies destroying unsold goods and goods in working order.
- Extend the option to make a deduction for the repair of goods not covered by the lifetime warranty.

### **Changes in the industry**

- Reduce sales of newly produced goods. The commerce industry needs to build its profitability more on circular business models and long-lasting products.
- Increase the supply of second-hand sales. More companies need to accept products they themselves or others have produced and re-sell them.
- Increase the range of mending and repair services and develop strategies to build profitability around these operations.
- Increase the supply of products for rent. This needs to be done both in different price and goods segments, as well as with different forms of rental, such as one-time rental and subscription.

## **6.7 Measures to reduce material volumes and improve choice of materials**

### **Political changes**

- Introduce taxes on packaging and wrapping that are differentiated based on the climate impact of the material used from a life cycle perspective.
- Standardise the plastic content of plastic products to increase the possibility of recycling.
- Introduce legal requirements for products to be designed so that materials can be separated from each other, so they can be more easily reused and recycled.
- Introduce policy instruments to equalise the price difference between recycled and new raw materials.

### **Changes in the industry**

- Promote reduced packaging use in both warehousing and e-commerce.
- Use a larger proportion of recycled materials in the industry's products and packaging.

- Phase out plastics with fossil components from the industry and encourage the development of biodegradable materials.

## **6.8 Measures for efficient and fossil-free transport**

### **Political changes**

- Tighten the legal requirements for the transition to fossil-free transport. In order to steer investments in vehicles and transport solutions away from fossil fuels, legislators need to set a clear limit on when fossil transport should be fully phased out.
- Plan public transport and urban environments in a way that facilitates public transport to and from physical stores and e-commerce delivery points.
- Requirements and guidelines for higher filling ratios in shipments.
- Legislation that makes it mandatory for companies to charge for shipping in order to reduce badly planned orders and unnecessary returns.
- Require e-commerce companies to provide information on the country of origin of the products and the company.

### **Changes in the industry**

- Jointly work towards a complete transition to renewable fuels in all shipments, both linked to storage and sales.
- Develop and broaden collaboration for streamlined delivery and returns handling for e-commerce operators.
- Encourage companies in the industry to reward and focus on marketing more environmentally friendly transport options and offer fewer alternative modes of transport at the same time.
- Promote the reduction of long-distance e-commerce deliveries in order to combat transportation that is harmful to the climate and environment, not least long-distance air transport.

## **6.9 Measures for a more sustainable food trade**

### **Political changes**

- Differentiate VAT on food based on its impact on the environment and climate.
- Introduce a general obligation for households and businesses to sort food waste, similar to the requirements that already exist today to sort packaging, newspapers, electrical waste and more.
- Introduce policy instruments to increase the consumption of plant-based foods, such as excise duties on meat, tariffs on climate detrimental meat and low meat content in public procurement.
- Set up support for farmers to move towards organic and plant-based food production. This can be done, for example, through advice, reorientation support, market development measures or a smarter use of EU agricultural support.

## Changes in the industry

- Develop working methods for how food retail stores can provide better information on how the customer can reduce their own food waste and information on how products often last longer than the best before date.
- Develop new ways of working to reduce food waste in stores.
- Encourage food retail companies to put a premium on locally grown, organic and plant-based foods in pricing and assortment.
- Develop standards and principles in the labelling industry with extended information on product shelf life.

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