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E.A.T.S

Empowering Agri-Food Chain
Through Social Dialogue

Desk research and Survey results

Deliverable 2.1

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Abbreviations

ABI	Acuerdo Básico Interconfederal (Basic Interconfederal Agreement)
AES	Acuerdo Económico y Social (Economic and Social Agreement)
AI	Acuerdo Interconfederal (Interconfederal Agreement)
AMI	Acuerdo Marco Interconfederal (Interconfederal Framework Agreement)
ANE	Acuerdo Nacional de Empleo (National Employment Agreement)
BFSA	Bulgarian Food Safety Agency
BKTD	Branch collective labor agreements (Bulgaria)
CNE	Conseil national de l'Emploi (National Employment Committee)
CNEL	Consiglio Nazionale dell'Economia e del Lavoro National Economy and Employment Council)
CNFPTLV	Conseil National de la Formation Professionnelle Tout au Long de la Vie (National Council for Lifelong Vocational Training)
CNNC	Commission Nationale de la Négociation Collective (National Collective Bargaining Commission)
CSE	Social and Economic Committee
EAFRD	European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development
EBAN	National Agricultural Bilateral Institution (Italy)
EBAT	Territorial Bilateral Institutions (Italy)
EC	European Commission
ECB	European Central Bank
ENRD	European Network for Rural Development
EPSR	European Pillar of Social Rights
ESC	Economic and Social Council
ESD	EU-level social dialogue
ESSD	EU-level sectoral social dialogue
EU	European Union
EWCs	European Works Councils
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GP	Good practice
IABG	"Fighting Hail" Executive Agency
IASRG	"Animal Selection and Reproduction" Executive Agency
ILC	International Labour Conference
ILO	International Labour Organization
IMF	International Monetary Fund
KTD	Collective Labour Agreement (Bulgaria)
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation





MADF	Ministry of Agricultural Development and Foodstuff
NCLAs	National Collective Labour Agreements
NS EAD	Irrigation systems EAD
OSH	Occupational Safety and Health
PP	Partido Popular (Spanish People's Party)
PSOE	Partido Socialista Obrero Español (Spanish Socialist Workers' Party)
RRN	National Rural Network
SCTC	Sectoral Council for Tripartite Cooperation
SD	Social Dialogue
SO	Specific Objective
SSA	Agricultural Academy
TFEU	Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union
WP	Working Paper





Introduction

The present report is the first research deliverable of the **E.A.T.S. (Empowering Agri-food Chain Actors Through Social Dialogue) project**, co-funded by the European Commission, and **constitutes the result of 10 months of research activities carried out by CNR, Fondazione ADAPT and Fondazione FAI-CISL concerning social dialogue in the agri-food sectors of the six countries interested by the project, i.e., Bulgaria, France, Greece, Italy, Spain and North Macedonia.**

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Notably CNR, as leader of the WP research, carried out the desk research activities functional to the drafting of Chapters 1-7 of the Report, while Fondazione ADAPT mainly focused on the drafting and administration of a survey concerning project topics, whose obtained data are analysed in Chapter 8. Fondazione FAI-CISL supported both partners with regard to their respective tasks.

As for what concerns the structure of the report, **the first chapter is dedicated to a brief summary of the objectives of the E.A.T.S. project**, together with a description of the Consortium composition and the identification of stakeholders who might be interested by the contents of the report. **An overview of social dialogue practices, processes and actors at the European level, with a specific focus on the agri-food sector** is also present, including the latest initiatives carried out by the EC with regard to the strengthening of social dialogue in all Member States.

Chapters 3 to 7 are dedicated to the reconstruction of industrial relations systems and social dialogue practices in the agri-food sectors of the six European member states and candidate countries interested by the project.

Despite their many differences both in terms of importance of the agri-food sector in the nation's economy and weight of the social partners in its regulation, the chapters dedicated to the mentioned countries follow an identical structure to facilitate comparison activities, and are therefore composed of: an introduction describing their political and institutional landscape, and their impact on industrial relations; a section dedicated to their national regulatory framework and the role granted to industrial relations actors and processes; the description of the main thematic areas addressed by national social dialogue; a focus of social dialogue in the country's agri-food sector.

As anticipated, **Chapter 8 is instead dedicated to the results of a survey administered to trade unionists and employers' representatives active in Bulgaria, France, Greece, Italy, Spain and North Macedonia.** After a brief description of the reached target of the respondents, the objectives and structure of the survey, Chapter 8 is divided into sub-paragraphs dedicated respectively to the explored topics which are: perceived relevance of social dialogue; more frequently discussed topics by social dialogue; level of social dialogue; ways of developing social dialogue; perceived relevance and means of influence of European social dialogue.

Lastly, **the report is accompanied by an Appendix listing and describing relevant projects concerning social dialogue in the agri-food sector of the considered countries, funded by national and international bodies.**





1. The E.A.T.S. project

1.1. General and specific objectives

The main objective of E.A.T.S. is the definition of a common protocol of guidelines to be established "bottom up", starting from the national and local industrial relations systems to become a collective heritage and an opportunity to strengthen the European agri-food value chain, through the empowerment of its key social actors and the enhancement of its ability to engage in social dialogue initiatives.

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E.A.T.S. aims at identifying, disseminating and promoting best practices related to the European Social Dialogue and industrial relations by focusing on the agri-food chain, from agricultural activities to product processing, in medium-large multinational companies where European Works Councils are present. This project therefore aims not only at allowing the dissemination and sharing of those best social dialogue practices already in place before the pandemic and/or developed during it among business and trade union organisations of EU member and candidate countries, but also at developing new guidelines that can be useful to member countries for the on-job management of the emergency and the definition of future work organisation methods to meet present and future challenges in the agri-food sector.

The comparative research and the consequent guidelines will become a working tool and shared heritage not only of the trade unions and of the employers' associations involved but also of every future actor of the Social Dialogue who, at the end of the project, can be inspired by it. This will be done through preparatory working group meetings, 5 national workshops, 1 final conference, targeted research activities (desk research, administration of a survey) and the drafting and the co-design of guidelines.

The project therefore has the following specific objectives:

- 1) To improve the awareness of trade unions, European enterprises, workers and consumers about the contribution that the European Union and the European Social Dialogue bring to the agri-food value chain and its results. This will take place through direct participation (for trade unions and employers' associations that are partners in the project) and indirect participation (for workers and consumers through the widespread communication of the initiative) in the national workshops to be held in the respective partner countries.
- 2) To strengthen the awareness of participating agri-food chain social actors on their ability to exert a positive influence in the national agri-food industrial relations systems, through the sharing of best practices and comparison between national systems.
- 3) To collect, analyse and disseminate the best practices that national trade unions and employers' associations involved in the project and Sectoral Social Dialogue Committees are currently putting in place in order to enhance their strengths and positive aspects replicable at European level and in other countries.





4) To draw up national and European guidelines and disseminate them within the wider basin of the Sectoral Social Dialogue Committees of the Agricultural and Food & Drink sectors to define common standards on protection and rights in the entire agri-food chain.

5) To accompany the Next Generation EU plan, in the countries involved, promoting a different economic development model based on a fairer distribution of value within the agri-food chain and on a sustainable, inclusive, regular and safe agri-food sector.

1.2. Partners and stakeholders involved

The project partnership is made up of the lead social partner organisation **Fai Cisl** (Italian Agricultural, Food, Environmental and Industrial Federation)) together with the following partners: **Coldiretti** (National Confederation of Direct Farmers - Italy), **Terra Viva** (Association of Free Agricultural Producers - Italy), **Fondazione Fai Cisl - Studi e Ricerche (Fai Cisl Foundation – Study and Research)** (Italy), **CNR** (Italian National Research Council - Italy), **Fondazione ADAPT** and its affiliate **Associazione ADAPT** (ADAPT (Association for International and Comparative Studies on Labour Law and Industrial Relations - Italy), **FGA-CFDT** (Federation of agri-food and agriculture jobs – French Democratic Confederation of Labour -France), **UGT-FICA** (Federation of Industry, Construction and Agriculture of the General Workers' Union - Spain), **OBES** (Federation of Industrial Trade Unions - Greece), **Agro-Sindikato** (North Macedonia), **FNSZ** (Federation of Independent Trade Unions in Agriculture - Bulgaria) and **EFFAT** (European Federation of Food, Agriculture and Tourism Trade Unions).

E.A.T.S. will promote a greater collective awareness in social partner organisations of their role in the context of the European Social Dialogue and of the importance of sharing good industrial relations practices at European level. The project is therefore based on the analysis of the national and territorial trade union activities as well as on peer-to-peer learning activities through the organisation of national and European workshops.

The European dimension of the activities is ensured by the large number of participating partners that include trade unions and employers' associations from EU member or candidate countries (Italy, France, Spain, Greece, Bulgaria, North Macedonia) and the European social partner EFFAT. The participation of EFFAT as a partner allows the presence in the Consortium of an authoritative protagonist of industrial relations at European level, further guaranteeing the transnational dimension of the project.





1.3. E.A.T.S. Research and Analysis

The E.A.T.S. partners collected and analysed information regarding social dialogue within selected countries with the aim of identifying the best practices that national trade unions involved and Sectoral Social Dialogue Committees are currently putting in place in order to enhance their strengths.

In particular, in the context of WP2 - Research and Analysis, E.A.T.S. collected and systematised a set of formal and informal knowledge and practices of positive industrial relations and European social dialogue in the agri-food sector. This has been accomplished firstly by performing desk research aimed at understanding the functioning of social dialogue in the selected countries and, then by administering an ad hoc survey to trade unions and employers' organisations in order to understand how social dialogue is actually developed within national contexts and to collect best practices employed by social partners.

The desk research was carried out by consulting scientific literature as well as grey literature and different other sources, and by consulting and acquiring the corpus of knowledge provided by the trade unions and employers' organisations involved in the project. It is worthy to stress that such corpus of knowledge has been fundamental to understanding the ways in which social dialogue is expressed in each national context considered, especially for what concerns the sectoral social dialogue in agri-food.

The desk research is presented with a division per country, since countries are our main level of analysis. Chapter 3 concerns Bulgaria, chapter 4 France, chapter 5 Greece, chapter 6 North Macedonia, and chapter 7 Spain. Each chapter is structured as follows: the first section presents an introduction of the evolution of social dialogue within the country. The second section examines the legislative framework governing social dialogue. The third section assesses how social dialogue is developed in the agri-food sector, and finally the fourth section describes the main themes that are the object of social dialogue.

1.4. The EU context

The E.A.T.S. project fits into the efforts that the EU has made in the last decades to enhance social dialogue within its member countries.

The European Social Dialogue (ESD)'s legal bases lie in articles 151-156 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU). Indeed, Art. 151 contends that fostering SD is a common objective of the EU and Member States, with the final end of improving European Governance. Already, in the Treaty of Rome in 1957, it was clarified that one of the Commission's tasks is to promote close cooperation between Member States with regard to the right of association and collective bargaining between employers and workers (Kennedy & Danesi, 2022). However, only in 1985 was the ESD process actually initiated during the Val Duchesse meeting held in collaboration with the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC), the Union of Industries of the European Community (UNICE) and the European Centre of Public Enterprises (CEEP), three of the key stakeholders of the ESD (Eurofound,





2021). In 1986, the Single European Act created the legal basis for the development of a community-wide social dialogue.

These first years aimed at creating a culture conducive to collective bargaining in Europe. A second stage in the development of the European Social Dialogue was marked by the adoption of the Social Protocol of the Maastricht Treaty in 1991, establishing the obligation from the Commission to consult social partners on social and work policies, and the possibility for social partners to suspend legislative initiatives (Eurofound, 2021). As part of this development, coordinating entities were needed to orchestrate common actions. In 1992, the Social Dialogue Committee (SDC) was created, establishing the main tool for bipartite social dialogue in Europe. From 1998, several sectoral social dialogue committees were set up to promote sector-specific and cross-industries negotiations and agreements. In view of fostering the participation of policymaking institutions in SD, since 2003, the Tripartite Social Summit for Growth and Employment meets twice a year.

Other important steps towards affirming the relevance of SD at EU level were made by the inclusion of SD in key documents and strategies such as the Lisbon Treaty in 2009, the 2017 European Pillar of Social Rights (EPSR), the European Green Deal and the European Council Porto Declaration (Kennedy & Danesi, 2022).

The main role of ESD and European Social Dialogue Committees was to bring national social partners' interests to the bargaining table at European level. Attempts were made to produce European-wide agreements such as the agreement on parental leave in 1996 (which then became European law) and the one on teleworking in 2002. However, the degree of transposition of these agreements at national levels was uneven among countries, thus making these agreements mostly ineffective (Eurofound, 2021).

Generally speaking, it can be noted how, for a long time, SD has been regarded as a cornerstone of the European social model (European Commission, 2015a; 2015b). However, in the last decade, both the European social model and the actors involved in SD have been under extreme pressure. The economic crisis starting in 2008 caused financial constraints that, together with the effects of an aging population and of technological change, put SD under strain because of budget cuts in social protection provisions (Kahancová et al., 2019).

Against this background, the von der Leyen Commission has repeatedly reaffirmed the commitment to strengthening social dialogue, in key documents and communications (e.g. the European Green Deal, the document on a Strong Europe for Just Transitions, the Annual Sustainable Growth Strategy, country-specific recommendations, and in the objectives of the Recovery and Resilience Facility). In May 2021, the Porto Social Commitment and the European Council Porto Declaration both underlined the key role of social dialogue. The Commission published a report on strengthening social dialogue in February 2021, which fed into the action plan implementing the European Pillar of Social Rights (EPSR) (Nahles & Schmit, 2021). The action plan contains the EC commitment to present an initiative on collective bargaining for self-employed people in 2021, and another on supporting social dialogue at EU and national level in 2022. In a recent legislative





initiative under the EPSR, the Commission proposed a directive on adequate minimum wages in the EU (COM (2020)0682). This initiative was significant in that it strengthened the use of collective bargaining in wage setting and required Member States that had less than 80% collective bargaining coverage to establish an action plan to promote this activity. SD occurs at many different levels including the European, the national and sub-national level, and the firm level. In addition, SD can be framed within as well as across sectors and can involve public and private actors. Since processes within the EU-level social dialogue (ESD) and the EU-level sectoral social dialogue (ESSD) interact with social dialogue processes in the member states, previous research has often approached social dialogue in the EU as a one-dimensional, linear and top-down process (Marginson & Keune, 2012). In this setting, social partners were believed to strongly depend on the EU level for the implementation of framework agreements in the national institutional systems of the EU member states. While more recent work has argued that social partners are increasingly exercising their autonomy, the role of the EC's influence as well as the role of national governments in this process should not be understated (Smismans, 2008; Weber, 2010).

Against this background, the European Commission has taken several initiatives to give a new impetus to SD. An evaluation of the extent to which such initiatives are successful is closely related to two factors. The first one is the concept of SD effectiveness, or the preconditions and ability for SD to produce relevant outcomes (Eurofound, 2019). The second one is acknowledging the fact that SD occurs at various interconnected levels in the EU which need to be studied in a relational perspective.

The recent Commission report on strengthening social dialogue (Nahles, & Schmit 2021) underlined the need to improve exchange of experience and best practices: in the light of existing differences in terms of capacities and national conditions, an exchange of experience and best practices is regarded as a powerful instrument to foster and boost social dialogue in Europe.

The Nahles report (2021) identified the following areas to be boosted in order to improve social dialogue in Europe:

1. A new award for innovative social dialogue
2. A new programme for young future leaders of social partner organisations
3. Greater involvement of social partners in the European Semester
4. Review the workings of the Tripartite Social Summit and the Social Dialogue Committee
5. Improved consultations of social partners on new Commission initiatives
6. More European social partner agreements:
7. Promotion of national registries for collective agreements:
8. Funding in support of Social Dialogue initiatives
9. Improved exchanges of experience and best practices
10. More dialogue on future-oriented subjects.





As for what concerns European Social Dialogue at a European level, it needs to be noted how the Sectoral Social Dialogue Committee concerning agriculture has been instituted several years ago, i.e., in 1999. The main European social partners participating in this Committee are COPA-COGECA, representing European farmers and cooperatives, and EFFAT (European Federation of Trade Unions in Food, Agriculture and Tourism). EFFAT is also a member of the Sectoral Social Dialogue Committee focused on the food and drink industry: here, however, its counterpart is FoodDrinkEurope, a representative organisation gathering European and national-level employers' associations in the food and drink industry, but also big multinationals active in the sector.

2. Bulgaria

2.1. Introduction

According to World Bank data¹, in 2019 (last year available), 6.6% of the active population in Bulgaria is employed in agriculture. To have a reference of comparison, the average of the active population employed in agriculture in the European Union is 4.8% while it is 3.2% in the Euro Area.

ILO data² show that Bulgaria in 2019, the last year available, registered a modest trade union density rate of 13.7%. This data, however, is in line with the tendency of the last decades that saw trade union losing attractiveness all around the EU, with the notable exceptions of the Scandinavian countries that registered density rates higher than 50%, Belgium (42.1%), Italy (32.5%), Austria (26.2%), and Ireland (25.4%).

The history of social dialogue in Bulgaria is strictly related to the transition from a totalitarian to a democratic regime that took place in 1991, after the fall of the Berlin Wall and the dissolution of the Soviet Union. The democratic transition in Bulgaria, as well as other ex-Soviet countries, involved a quick shift in the economic and political institutions' paradigm that involved a challenge to trade unions as well as other social and political actors (Tomev, 2017).

In the context of the political shift from authoritarianism to democracy and the economic shift from a programmed to a free-market capitalist economy, trade unions were both weakened and empowered. They were weakened since the processes of privatisation, economic transformation and costly social reforms lead to a consistent membership loss; however, they were also empowered since all these processes ended up in the implementation of unions' deep internal reforms that allow them to become democratic and independent actors (Upchurch, 2006).

During the Bulgarian transition, unions followed two different paths, on the one hand the formation of a new organisation (Podkrepa) that was constituted a few months before the regime change as an opposition organisation shaped by Polish Solidarność; while on the other hand, the existing communist Central Council of

¹ <https://databank.worldbank.org/reports.aspx?source=2&series=SL.AGR.EMPL.ZS&country=>

² <https://ilostat.ilo.org/topics/union-membership/>





Bulgarian Trade Unions (CC BTU) underwent a radical change that led the union to organisational as well as political independence (Daskalova, 2015). After the democratisation process, the main political parties pushed through neo-liberal policies even if with different views and degrees, and most of them showed an ambiguous aptitude of collaboration when performing opposition roles while hostile when being in power. Also, many political parties created their own unions (e.g., the Bulgarian Socialist Party created Edinovo Union), contributing to the fragmentation of social partner organisations.

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International actors and institutions heavily contributed to shape the Bulgarian political and economic transitions, impacting on the development of social dialogue itself. Using the method of conditionality while granting loans, international institutions required the country to introduce principles and methods of neo-liberal order. As a result, tripartite consultations and agreements began to be set up. Some authors also described Bulgarian tripartite negotiations as “transition corporatism”, observing that such agreements played the role of symbolically including workers’ interests aiming at social peace in the presence of low government legitimacy (Ost, 2010; Delteil 2015). Gradev (2001) also noted how the process was indeed quadripartite rather than tripartite, with the IMF as a fourth partner that shaped labour relations in the course of the transition even without formally sitting at negotiation tables.

The 2008 economic crisis abruptly interrupted a period of growth for Bulgaria. In particular, the crisis strongly reduced domestic demand and investments, and that was what gave impetus to the pre-crisis growth. The crisis caused the loss of about 400,000 jobs, the unemployment rate rose to 12.9% in 2013, while youth unemployment rose up to 28.4% (Tomev, 2017).

To face the situation, the government led by Sergei Stanishev implemented a package of measures in late 2008 which, however, did not obtain the expected results: therefore, like other EU countries, Bulgaria responded to the crisis with the implementation of austerity measures such as wage freezing and social benefit cutting. Bulgarian unions then decided to organise a rally demanding for the cancellation of such measures.

The new centre-right government elected in 2009 activated a standing group aimed at optimising social dialogue and involving the social partners in the management of the crisis. However, most of the measures elaborated were never implemented and this caused discontent among social partners, in particular among unions. The failure of the tripartite process gave impetus to the launch of bipartite negotiations that led to the approval of many anti-crisis measures that were then implemented during 2010.

Notwithstanding some improvement, in some specific fields, the economic crisis and the austerity measures implemented to face it put much pressure on the social partners challenging the existing mechanisms but also weakened the spirit of social partnership (Tomev 2014). This process, furthermore, has been accompanied by several difficulties experienced by the unions such as the decline of membership and budget reduction.





2.2. Regulatory Framework

Social dialogue and collective bargaining in Bulgaria are developing in the context and under the influence of processes in Europe and the world. Social dialogue is a relatively new phenomenon in labour relations and in Bulgarian labour legislation, arising in the early 1990s, along with democratic changes.

Labour legislation - the general legal regulation of the Social Dialogue is contained in Art. 2 and Art. 3 of the Labor Code³. The legal content of social dialogue is defined in Art. 2 of the Labour Code: "The state regulates labour and directly related relations, insurance relations and issues of the standard of living after consultation and dialogue with workers, employees, employers and their organisations in the spirit of cooperation, mutual concessions and respect for the interests of each of the parties."

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Art. 2 of the Labour Code lists specific topics on which the dialogue is held - labour, social security and living standards issues, including:

- Income and employment, working conditions
- Approving the collective labour agreement
- Increasing the awareness of workers and employees
- Motivation of workers and employees for active participation in work processes
- Development and strengthening of corporate social responsibility.

In its essence, social dialogue represents a permanent involvement of the social partners – employers' and trade union organisations - in the discussion and determination of the main guidelines both in the development of labour relations and in the economic and social policy at the national level. The parties that participate in the social dialogue are employers and their organisations, workers, trade unions and state bodies and institutions.

Within the Bulgarian context, social dialogue and collective bargaining are structured at different levels, involving different actors: i) National Council for Tripartite Cooperation – with participation of Government, Employers and Unions; Sectoral/Branch Council; Municipal councils for tripartite cooperation; and Commission for social partnership in enterprises – with participation of Employers and Unions. The National Council for Tripartite Cooperation discusses and expresses opinions and views on issues of national importance, sectoral and branch councils discuss and give opinions and views on issues specific to the sectors or branches, and municipal councils discuss and come up with opinions on topics of local/municipal importance.

The social dialogue in the country is regulated by the national legislation and the additional normative documents related to it, and they fully correspond to the European norms and standards. The general legal regulation of the social dialogue is contained in Art. 1, Par. 3 and Art. 2 of the Labour Code. A specific regulation of

³ <https://tinyurl.com/Labor-Code>





the indicated various forms of its manifestation is contained in articles: 3-3f, 6-7, 50-60 in the Labour Code and in a number of other labour and social laws.

The state participates in all bodies of tripartite cooperation through its bodies and representatives - Council of Ministers, individual ministries and ministers, regional and municipal governors and mayors of municipalities/their representatives. In the field of social dialogue, the role of the state is both regulatory and corresponding to that of an employer. It not only discusses the issues in the bodies of tripartite cooperation, but also makes the final decisions.

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There is a legal obligation that all laws related to labour or insurance relations and the standard of living should be discussed in the National Council for Tripartite Cooperation. Another important channel for dialogue and raising social issues in the structures are deliberate bilateral meetings with the Minister of Agriculture on specific cases. FNSZ introduced an innovative and unprecedented practice of concluding an Agreement between the trade union organisations and the employer to establish the possible more favourable working conditions for civil servants/trade union members.

These agreements are an integral part of the collective agreements in force because in practice, the Agreements are concluded between the same parties – the trade union organisation and the same employer in one case in their capacity as an employer, and in the second in their capacity as an appointing authority. At every level, employers and trade unions manage to agree on more favourable agreements than the legally established ones, and at the enterprise level, the negotiations achieved are higher than the sectoral bargaining.

All concluded collective agreements are aimed at maintaining and developing a relationship of mutual respect between the parties and voluntary settlement of problems of mutual interest to prevent disputes and conflicts. They are also based on the principle of equality. At all levels of the collective labour agreement, there are councils for social partnership to monitor the implementation of the KTD (collective labour agreement), hold consultations and resolve the problems that have arisen. In all collective agreements, there are clauses for joining the KTD, as well as agreed contributions for the joining of workers and employees who are not members of the trade union parties, to the collective agreement.

The main sections in all collective agreements usually cover:

- Representation, applicability and scope
- Informing and consulting
- Qualification and professional training
- Employment
- Wages and other payments
- Working hours, breaks and holidays
- Additional remuneration
- Safe and healthy working conditions
- Social and trade union activity
- Relations between the parties





2.3. Social dialogue in the agri-food sector

Social dialogue in agriculture is carried out at the sectoral level in the sectoral council for tripartite cooperation at the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Forestry. The social partners participating to the council are: on the part of the unions FNSZ-KNSB and NFSGZ-KT "Podkrepa", and on the side of the employers, the Association of Agricultural Producers in Bulgaria, the National Union of Agricultural Cooperatives in Bulgaria and the Bulgarian Association of Farmers.

At meetings of the Sectoral Council for Tripartite Cooperation at the Ministry of Agriculture, the following topics are discussed: issues related to structural, financial and organisational problems affecting labour and service relations, income, employment, those working in the branches of the Ministry of Agriculture and agricultural producers; European payments and national surcharges; distribution of the budget of the Ministry of Agriculture to secondary authorities; increase in wages.

In addition to tripartite cooperation, there are other forms of social cooperation including collective bargaining, participation of workers and employees in the enterprise and settlement of collective labour disputes voluntarily through direct negotiations, mediation and arbitration procedures.

The Sectoral council for tripartite cooperation (SCTC) is structured and subject to its own regulations for its activity. Thanks to the functional structure of this council, trade unions have the opportunity to have the information they need in time related to the budget of the Ministry of Health and its distribution by structural units and policies, numbers, average salary, as well as the budget of the State Fund "Agriculture", direct payments and other important agricultural policy issues.

Sectoral trade unions actively participate in the civil and social dialogue by preparing and providing opinions on draft laws, and political documents on sectoral or trade union issues on a national and European level. Every year, within the framework of the budget procedure, unions present their opinion and request under the Law on the Budget of Bulgaria to the National Assembly and all advisory bodies.

With a circle of active agricultural branch organisations, joint meetings and discussions are regularly held, bills, programmes and resolutions are jointly discussed, and proposals are prepared for the executive and legislative authorities.

As a result of the reasonable, consistent and competent conduct of the negotiations and within the time frame established by the law, the Branch Trade Union Councils and the employers' organisations conclude Branch collective labour agreements /BKTD and an Agreement with the Agricultural Cooperatives in the following organisational structures/systems:

- Agricultural Academy, SSA
- Bulgarian Food Safety Agency, BFSA
- Irrigation systems EAD, NS EAD
- Executive Agency "Fighting Hail", IABG
- Executive Agency "Animal Selection and Reproduction", IASRG
- National Union of Agricultural Cooperatives in Bulgaria.





2.4 Main thematic areas of social dialogue

Social dialogue in Bulgaria deals with several different themes. The themes, indeed, change according to the changes intervening in the Bulgarian socio-economic context. Some of them, nevertheless, remain more constant than others. This is also due to the fact that the Bulgarian legislative framework, and in particular Art. 2 of the Labour Code lists specific topics on which the dialogue is held. These include:

- Income and employment, working conditions
- Approving the collective labour agreement
- Increasing the awareness of workers and employees
- Motivation of workers and employees for active participation in the work process
- Development and strengthening of corporate social responsibility.

Other themes in recent times have been more context-dependent. In particular, the Covid-19 pandemic made it necessary to consider other aspects that were not relevant before. For instance, during the first phases of the pandemic, a discussion started around the development and discussion of emergency measures at the sectoral level in relation to the consequences of the Covid-19 crisis, as well as to emergency actions in the agricultural sector and mitigation of the impact of the pandemic.

Further themes have been added to the Bulgarian social dialogue due to changes occurring in the population sensitivity, and they are also often driven by the EU context. This is, for instance, the case with gender equality which is directly related to income, working environment and conditions, or which concerns the right to information and consultation.

Finally, other themes developed together with the changes experienced by the job market, including the more and more embedded digitalisation, such as:

- Employment – management of jobs: permanent, seasonal, family, etc.
- Professional training and qualification – more attention on training, qualification and retraining of employees so that they are adequate to the technological processes.
- Safe workplaces – working in a safe and secure environment, reducing occupational accidents and injuries through prevention and working professional practices.
- Validating skills – enhancing mobility.
- Countering social dumping and unfair competition.





3. France

3.1. Introduction

According to World Bank data⁴, in France in 2019, 2.5% of the active population was employed in agriculture.

ILO data⁵ show that France in 2019 registered a quite low trade union density rate of 8.9%. France, therefore, shows a trade union density rate amongst the lowest within the European Union.

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In France, the legal basis for the establishment of freedom of association dates back to the Waldeck-Rousseau law of 1884 and then to the law of 1901, which recognises the right of any person capable of contracting to associate without prior authorisation. It preserves the freedom and the rights of the individuals while allowing the enhancement of collective action.

Moreover, the 1901 legislation founded the right of association on the principles resulting from the revolution of 1789: primacy of the individual, their rights and their freedom, freedom to join or to leave an association, limitation of the object of the association to a defined object, equality of the members of an association, administration of the association by free deliberation of its members.

Freedom of association was constitutionalised by the decision of the French Constitutional Council on July 16, 1971 which gave it the status of a fundamental principle recognised by the laws of the Republic.

One of the central issues (and benefits) of the implementation of the freedom of associations comes with the right of representativeness that workers can gain. In this concern, any employer, group or association of employers can sign a "simple" collective agreement which is only binding on the signatories or their members. On the other hand, when extension is requested, with the effect of to make the provisions of the agreement binding on all the companies included in the field of application scope (professional, territorial) of the text, two conditions are required from the employer: the signatories must be organised as trade unions or employers' associations, on the one hand, and these unions or associations of employers must be representative in the professional and/or territorial field of the agreement, on the other hand.

3.2. Regulatory Framework

Despite the fact that the French constitution does not contain any references to collective bargaining and trade union representativeness, French governments have developed, during the years, many ordinary laws on these issues. With regard to trade union representativeness, reference should be made to Law 2008/789, that

⁴ <https://databank.worldbank.org/reports.aspx?source=2&series=SL.AGR.EMPL.ZS&country=>

⁵ <https://ilostat.ilo.org/topics/union-membership/>





introduced the main criteria on the basis of which a trade union can be considered representative.

The 2008 law, in addition to some general criteria (respect for republican values, independence, financial transparency, seniority, influence, membership and union contributions), requires a union to win at least 10% of the votes at company level elections for employee representatives to be considered representative at company level, and 8% of the votes at sectoral and cross-industry level. However, the votes to be used as the basis of these calculations are the votes in the first round of the elections, when only unions can nominate candidates. Only if less than half those eligible fail to vote for the union-nominated candidates is there a second round in which non-union candidates can also stand.

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Historically, since the late 1940s, the CGT, CFDT, CGT-FO (or FO), the CFTC and the CFE-CGC have represented the unions within the French system.

For many years, these five unions were considered representative at national level, without being required to demonstrate a specific level of support. The peculiarity of this status was given by the fact that they had the rights to negotiate and to nominate candidates for elections. Moreover, there were also other union groupings, such as the FSU, UNSA and Solidaires. Even though they had significant influence, they did not have the legal status of the five representative unions.

Since the 2008 law, in many company and sectoral contexts, there has been a reduction of the representative trade unions, while at the cross-industry level, the 8% threshold was reached by all the five confederations that were previously considered representative.

Concerning employers, the French framework is characterised by different cross-sectoral organisations. The main organisations are: the Mouvement des Entreprises de France (MEDEF) (Movement of the Entreprises of France), Confédération générale des Petites et Moyennes Entreprises (CPME) (Confederation of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises), and previously the Union Professionnelle Artisanale (UPA) (Artisanal Professional Union), now known as Union des Entreprises de Proximité (U2P) (Union of Local Businesses).

It is also important to note that, in parallel to the regulatory system for the representation of workers, the legislator introduced a regulatory system for the representation of companies. In these terms, the laws of March 5, 2014 and August 8, 2016 created for the first time a legal framework for employer representativeness for collective bargaining. This is a major step to stabilise and consolidate the place recognised to the social partners in the elaboration of systems applicable to companies and employees, at the national, multi-professional and inter-professional level, as well as at the professional branches. Negotiations may be initiated by the employer or at the request of a representative trade union organisation to determine the schedule, frequency, topics and procedures for negotiations within the company.

Nowadays, the social partners in France are organised into different levels of representation. There is a national level, where deliberative bodies define the main





guidelines and course of action for the union. This level is usually led by one person with the title of secretary general. The unions then have local levels, both regional and municipal. The unions also have an enterprise level, where there is a union representative within an individual company. National social dialogue takes place at national, regional, sectoral and company levels through its different structures.

In France, collective agreements can be distinguished between the following three levels:

- cross-industry agreements;
- sectoral agreements;
- company agreements.

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Special procedures have also recently been introduced to facilitate the conclusion of company agreements in companies with fewer than 50 employees, where there are no trade union delegates.

Moreover, social partners in France continuously interact formally and informally with relevant national stakeholders to establish the social dialogue agenda and discuss in three tripartite bodies in regard to drawing up national reforms. These bodies are represented by:

- CNNC for reforms concerning industrial relations;
- CNE for reforms in relation to employment;
- CNFPTLV for reforms concerning training.

In addition, social partners may interact in several consultation bodies and technical committees, which exist at four levels:

- Comités techniques ministériels (ministerial technical committees);
- Comités techniques de proximité (local technical committees);
- Comités techniques uniques, comités techniques communs (joint or single technical committees);
- Comités techniques spéciaux (specific technical committees) such as works councils and health and safety committees.

The legislation passed in 2007 gave unions and employers a much clearer role in the development of legislation in the areas of industrial relations, employment and training. In these terms, when the government wishes to make changes in these areas, it must first consult with employers and unions on the basis of a document setting out its analysis of the situation, aims and potential options, and allow them, if possible, to reach an agreement on the issue. The government must also formally consult on the draft legislation. However, the government is not automatically bound to accept any agreement. Indeed, in cases of urgency, it can bypass the process entirely. In this way, however, it strengthens the importance of social dialogue at national level.

Having discussed the partners and their role within the framework of collective bargaining, it is important to analyse the role of agreements and how they are stipulated.





At company level, collective agreements can only be signed by representative trade unions. These agreements can be considered valid only if signed by unions with the support in the most recent elections of less than 50% but more than 30% of the workforce, which has the right and the duty to approve these agreements. Either one of the signatory unions can ask for a ballot of the whole workforce to be organised, or the employer can ask for a ballot, provided that none of the signatory unions object. If, within eight days, enough other union organisations also agree to sign the agreement, and so take support to more than 50% of the workforce, it is then valid. If this is not the case, a ballot of the whole workforce must be organised within two months. If a majority of those voting in this ballot approve the agreement, it is then endorsed and comes into effect.

Before the changes introduced in September 2017, many of these arrangements only applied to company agreements covering issues such as working time and paid leave. Since 1 May 2018, these agreements have applied to all areas covered by company-level collective bargaining. As a result, it has been possible for union delegates to agree that, in future, the power to negotiate company-level agreements should pass from the union delegate to the elected representative body of the employees – known as Social and Economic Committee (CSE). This is a permanent change, and it produces veto powers for the CSE in some areas. However, this change is only possible on the basis of a majority agreement agreed by unions representing more than 50% of the employees.

Moreover, in companies with a workforce of between 11 and 49 employees, there are two main options for the planification of agreements. In the first one, the employer negotiates with existing elected employee representatives, who may or may not be mandated by the union, but who must represent a majority of the workforce, for the agreement to be valid. This option does not require a workforce vote. In option two, the employer negotiates with employees who are not elected representatives but have been mandated to negotiate by one or more of the representative unions. In this case, a workforce vote in favour is required for the agreement to be valid.

In companies with fewer than 11 employees, the employer can reach an agreement directly with the workers. This process requires the employer to present a proposal for an agreement to the employees at least 15 days before a consultation to decide whether or not to accept it. Two-thirds of the employees must support it before it can be agreed.

In terms of timing of the agreements, at company level, it is possible for the two sides to agree a calendar which ensures that there will be negotiations on most of the topics where negotiations are mandatory at least every four years. The four-year limit cannot be exceeded for these issues.

Under the new architecture resulting from the 2017 reform, in many thematic areas, company agreements now take precedence over sectoral agreements, although there are others, such as minimum pay rates, where sectoral agreements continue to set the rules.





Specifically, since 2017, company-level agreements have priority unless the law specifically gives precedence to sectoral agreements.

Issues for negotiation are now divided into three blocks:

- Issues where the law states that sectoral agreements take precedence;
- Issues where sectoral agreements continue to take precedence, because the sectoral agreement itself has stated that this should be the case and the law permits this;
- Issues where company-level agreements take precedence, irrespective of what the sectoral agreement states.

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The first block is represented by sectoral agreements setting binding rules. The issues covered in this block concern minimum salaries, job classifications, equal opportunities, the minimum length of part-time work, overtime rates, rules on renewing probation periods, health insurance, rules on temporary contracts and the number of hours required to be worked to be defined as a night-worker.

The second block concerns the terms of the sectoral agreement and determines whether it has precedence, and determines what are the occupational risk prevention measures. It also concerns the employment of disabled workers, the arrangements for trade union representation, including their number, and supplements for dangerous or hazardous work.

The third block concerns everything else, although some of them are also covered by statutory regulation. Bonuses, paid holidays, most issues relating to working time, notice periods, payments for travelling time, compensation for dismissal and the initial length of the probation period, can all be agreed at company level, without reference to sectoral agreements. There is a legal requirement to negotiate periodically on some of these issues at company level. However, this provision depends in part on the size of the company and the existence of a trade union representative to negotiate with.

Agreements between unions and employers at sectoral level are binding on the employers belonging to signatory employers' associations. However, their importance is greatly increased by the fact that the government also has power to extend the terms of a sectoral agreement to all the employers in the sector, and even to enlarge it to other similar industries or beyond its initial geographic scope.

In addition, extension or enlargement can be requested by any of the parties of the agreement, and the decision is taken by the minister who is advised by a subcommittee made up of representatives of the unions and the employers. This process does not require specific thresholds, even though employers' organisations have the right to object to the extension of an agreement.

Despite the creation of a clear legal system for the correct implementation of regular contracts, the alarming practice of non-regular contracts is still present in the country. In the absence of declaration, workers experience lack of representation as well as the recognition of basic rights belonging to the working status. The latter can be represented by explicit and guaranteed assurances in terms of wages, paid leave for health or personal reasons, working hours and conditions, official





representation by syndicates and also insurance for injuries in the working place. Undeclared workers are often forced to work in situations of OSH insecurity which can lead to dehumanising working conditions. However, workers belonging to this category, because of racial or social issues, are usually forced to accept these diminishing working situations given the scarce range of viable job options.

This issue also concerns companies. Indeed, informal work is likely to distort the conditions of fair competition and undermine the normal functioning of the labour market in an economy. By employing undeclared persons, fraudulent companies escape regulation and can then profit abusively from lower labour costs than companies in good standing. The balance of of all the sectors can be affected.

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3.3. Social dialogue in the agri-food sector

According to the last data, in France, in 2020, a total of 758,300 people worked on a regular basis on the farm, 208,000 fewer than ten years earlier (-21.5 %). The 65.4% of these permanent workers in 2020 were farm managers and their employees, the 12.1%, were the family members they employ and the 22.5% were non-family employees who had worked at least 8 months of the year on the farms. Casual and seasonal labour accounts for 11% of the total workforce

Looking at the development of social dialogue in this area, the general rules governing social dialogue are common to all professional sectors, including agriculture, both in terms of company-level bargaining and sectoral or cross-industry bargaining. However, in the agricultural sector, these general rules are complemented by some particular ones.

First of all, we have to consider that, according to article R. 2231-1 of the Labour Code, for agricultural professions, the powers conferred on the Minister for Labour are exercised in agreement with them by the Minister for Agriculture. The Minister for Agriculture extends all collective agreements in the agricultural professions and wage supplements implemented at departmental or regional level.

Furthermore, the CNNEFP has a specific agricultural section, commonly known as the agricultural sub-committee, responsible for examining collective agreements in the agricultural professions and giving an opinion on their extension or enlargement. It is chaired by the Minister for Agriculture or their representative, and comprises 5 member of employers' associations and five members of trade unions.

The employers' organisations that were considered representative in the agricultural branches in 2021 include the FNSEA (National Federation of Agricultural Holders' Unions), those at national and multi-professional level in the agricultural activities sector, and in the agricultural production and agricultural equipment use cooperatives branch, the FNEDT (National Federation of Territory Entrepreneurs), the ETARD (the National Collective Convention of Agricultural, Rural and Forestry Companies), the forest property sector organisations, the FNB (National Wood Federation) in the forestry and sawmill sector and the UNEP (National Union of Landscape Companies) () in the landscape companies sector.





Moreover, the representative trade unions in the agricultural branches are the CGT (General Confederation of Labour), the CFTD (French Democratic Confederation of Labour), the CFTC (French Confederation of Christian Workers), the CFE-CGC (French Confederation of Management – General Confederation of Executives) and the CGT-FO (General Confederation of Labour – Workers' Force).

Collective bargaining in the agricultural sector in France has been characterised, in the last years, by the reorganisation process of the agricultural branches, that was initiated in 2016 with the signature, by all the agricultural social partners, of the "agreement on objectives for the restructuring of collective bargaining in the inter-branch agricultural sector". The agreement covered nearly 200 branches, most of them local and set up three standing joint negotiating and interpretation commissions (CPPNI) with the goal to set up three major national collective bargaining agreements (CCN):

- the Cuma (National Collective Convention on Agricultural Production and Cooperatives Using Agricultural Equipment), signed on 15 September 2020 and came into force on 1 April 2021;
- the ETARF; signed on 8 October 2020 and came into force on 1 April 2021;
- the convention collective nationale des exploitations forestières, des scieries agricoles et du rouissage-teillage de lin (National Collective Convention on Forest Exploitations, Agricultural Sawmills and Thrax Retting-Scutting), whose negotiations are currently in progress.

The new national collective agreements introduce new standards for employers and employees in the sector, while at the same they preserve a place for local social dialogue that plays a very important role in compensating for the absence of company bargaining in small companies in the sector.

84 collective agreements were signed in the agricultural sector in 2021: 43% at national level, 34% at regional and inter-departmental level, 23% at departmental level.

3.4. Main thematic areas of social dialogue

Negotiations in France cover a wide range of issues, including some where there is a requirement that negotiations take place. At sectoral level, in particular, negotiation is obligatory in the following themes:

- pay;
- equality between women and men, and measures to tackle the inequalities identified;
- working conditions, staffing and career development and exposure to occupational risks;
- disabled workers;
- occupational training;
- job classification;
- employee saving schemes;
- arrangements for organising part-time work.





Most of these topics must be negotiated at least every four years, provided a timetable for negotiations has been agreed, and more frequently, either annually or every three years, where there is no timetable. The exceptions are job classifications and employee saving schemes, which must in all cases be negotiated every five years, and arrangements for part-time work, which must be negotiated as soon as a third of the employees in an industry are working part-time. However, while there are penalties if these negotiations do not take place, it is important to stress that there is no obligation to reach an agreement, and sometimes the employer will simply listen to the unions' demands and implement a unilateral decision.

4. Greece

4.1 Introduction

According to World Bank data⁶, in 2019 (last year available), 11.6% of the Greek active population was employed in agriculture. Agriculture, therefore, represents a major sector within the Greek economy.

ILO data⁷ shows that Greece in 2019 (last year available) registered a quite low trade union density rate of 19%. The density rate is higher than other EU countries such as Spain (12.4%), but still seems to follow the pattern registered in the last decades that has seen trade unions losing attractive power for workers all around the EU.

To understand how social dialogue developed in Greece, it is important to consider the country's political and economic development during the second half of the twentieth century. In 1967 Greece experienced a democratic backlash when, following a coup d'état, the military apparatus took power in the country instituting what it is called the Regime of the Colonels. The authoritarian regime that followed the coup lasted for seven years, until 1974 when a new coup was carried out by a part of the military junta that finally ended with the restoration of democracy. The authoritarian regime ruling Greece from 1967 to 1974 was characterised, among other aspects, by right-wing cultural and economic policies, an anti-communist attitude and the implementation of civil and political restrictions on liberties.

The authoritarian regime led Greece to experience a late economic development that, combined with economic protection policies and wage suppression, limited Greek growth of competitive industries at least until 1974 (Zambarloukou, 2006). Economic development, in fact, was mainly concentrated in small, labour-intensive and low added-value enterprises and the agricultural sector (Gianitsis, 1988).

In the post-war era, Greece saw the development of an economic model in which collective bargaining was controlled by the state (Zambarloukou, 2006). A more modern model of social dialogue in Greece developed starting from the 1990s,

⁶ <https://databank.worldbank.org/reports.aspx?source=2&series=SL.AGR.EMPL.ZS&country=>

⁷ <https://ilostat ilo.org/topics/union-membership/>





when the government finally agreed to launch consultations with social partners before undertaking legislative initiatives concerning economic and social policy (OKE, 2002). However, notwithstanding a certain development in the direction of creating a system of free collective bargaining, until the financial crisis of 2008, the processes of decentralisation of wage bargaining that were active in most of EU countries in Greece were partially hindered by the strong central regulatory attitude of the state (Lavdas 2007).

The financial crisis of 2008 hit Greece with particular force and the measures implemented by the Greek government, forced by the Troika of creditors (ECB – EU – IMF), caused the total dismantling of the collective bargaining system inherited by the previous period (Lehndorff, Dribbusch and Schulten, 2018), and also caused serious and prolonged consequences for the Greek economy overall.

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As pointed out, before the financial crisis, social dialogue in Greece was very centralised with a high level of government regulation at both individual and collective levels (Koukiadaki and Kretsos, 2012). In 2010, the Greek government concluded an agreement with the Troika, accepting to apply a memorandum of understanding, and adopting a series of measures including a heavy austerity programme and fiscal adjustment (Kyriakoulis, 2012). The implementation of such measures, included in three separate memoranda, affected social dialogue practices and procedures. These measures, in fact, included actions directed to reforming the labour market, the employment relations' legal framework, as well as the way in which social dialogue was carried out (Kyriakoulis, 2012). One of the most evident examples of the radical change which interested the Greek industrial relations system after the Troika interventions was the shift from a collectively bargained minimum wage (individuated through a cross-sectoral national agreement) to a statutory minimum wage system.

Concerning social dialogue, one of the changes that radically mutates it is the shift from a model of sectoral collective bargaining to a company-level one, and more recently to an individual one between the employee and employer. Marangos (2017) pointed out how after six years from the beginning of the Troika programme, such measures had at least three repercussions on the bargaining process: a) sectoral and collective agreements sharply decreased; b) conversely, company level agreements increased; c) the share of workers covered by collective agreements decreased from 65% to 10%; and d) adoption of a new type of collective agreements.

4.2. Regulatory Framework

The right of freedom of association in Greece is first and foremost guaranteed by the country's constitution⁸. Article 12.1 of the Greek constitution in fact stated that: "*Greeks shall have the right to form non-profit associations and unions, in compliance with the law, which, however, may never subject the exercise of this*

⁸ <https://www.hellenicparliament.gr/UserFiles/f3c70a23-7696-49db-9148-f24dce6a27c8/001-156%20aggliko.pdf>





right to prior permission". How this right can be enjoyed and unfold its effects is then regulated by the law.

In this respect, there are different laws in the Greek system that regulate social dialogue and, in particular, after the financial crisis of 2008, several laws were adopted and implemented in order to strictly regulate several aspects of social dialogue. Overall, contrary to what happens in most EU countries, Greek social dialogue is strongly regulated by the government.

The main law concerning the operation of trade unions, trade union rights and workers' representation in Greece is L1464/82 which establishes that a trade union has to have at least 21 members, establishes the structure of second degree trade unions that may be at local level (Labour Centres) or at sectoral/intersectoral level (Trade union Federations) and establishes the way it is assured that each worker may be represented through a sole trade union to the second degree trade unions and each trade union through a sole second degree trade union to the General Workers' Confederation GESEE. It also establishes collective bargaining and collective agreements. Additionally, Law 1767/88 established works councils in companies with over 50 employees, Presidential Decree 204/2006 transposed Directive 2002/14 for information and consultation, and Law 4052/52 for information and consultation at European level, and the operation of EWCs. The recent Law 4808/21 amended Law 1264/82 with provisions against harassment and for the protection of families, as well as introducing digital elections and digital processes in trade unions.

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According to the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC)⁹, there are also laws that in some sense complicate and somehow hinder social dialogue and the rights usually attached to it. For instance, according to Law 1264/1982, civil servants employed in regional and local public law legal entity bodies have restrictions on their right to strike. The same law provides that judges do not have the right to strike.

Also, according to Law 1264/1982, the right to strike is prohibited or severely limited in the context of a number of services that are deemed to be essential such as: healthcare services; the purification and distribution of water; the generation and distribution of electricity or fuel gas; the production or refining of crude oil; the transport of persons and goods by land, sea or air; telecommunications and postal services, radio and television; the drainage of sewage and wastewater; the loading, unloading and storage of merchandise imports in ports; the Bank of Greece, civil aviation and all types of services or parts of services responsible for the settlement and payment of wages to public sector staff. According to the surveys conducted by the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC)¹⁰, such barriers to the right of striking are made by creating a discretionary and long list of essential services.

Other relevant norms have been adopted following the 2008 financial crisis and the implementation of the memoranda.

⁹ <https://survey.ituc-csi.org/Greece.html?lang=en#tabs-2>

¹⁰ <https://survey.ituc-csi.org/Greece.html?lang=en#tabs-2>





With Act No. 3845/2010, the government decided to abolish the 'favourability principle' according to which professional and enterprise collective agreements' clauses cannot deviate from the relevant clauses of sectoral and general national agreements. It also establishes that sectoral collective agreements' clauses cannot deviate from the relevant clauses of national general collective agreements, and in doing so, reducing the mandatory applicability of collective agreements' clauses. In addition, with Act No. 4024/2011, the government stated that if no trade union is present in the company, an association of persons can conclude collective agreements. According to the ITUC, such a combination of laws "*leave a void for association of persons to have priority to make firm-level agreements over negotiations which previously took place with respect to small enterprises at the relevant sectoral level*". In addition, while the minimum number of affiliates to form a trade union is 20, the minimum number to form an association of persons is 5. Due to the nature of the Greek fabric industry in which small enterprises prevail over medium and large ones, representing approximately 90% of the workforce, the provision of association of persons in addition to the abolition of the favourability principle caused a negative impact on the very foundations of collective bargaining and social dialogue in Greece, thus creating the possibility of bypassing representative trade unions to bargain directly with workers' representatives.

Addressing this and other issues, in the context of the 107th International Labour Conference held in 2018, in their conclusions¹¹, the ILO Committee on the Application of Standards asked the Greek government to "*ensure that public authorities refrain from acts of interference, which restrict the right to free and voluntary collective bargaining, or impede its lawful exercise*". Within the same conclusions, the ILO Committee on the Application of Standards also observed that Law No. 4549/2018, which grants the right to unilateral recourse to arbitration that permits either party unilaterally to request compulsory arbitration for the settlement of a dispute, does not promote voluntary collective bargaining, so hindering the processes of social dialogue.

Lastly and more recently, with Law 4808/2021, the Greek government established the creation of a database with a general Registry of Trade Unions of Employees maintained by the Ministry of Labour. With this law, trade unions are obliged to register to such a database in order to get a legal status (for the trade unions established after the entry into force of the Law) and to be able to enjoy and exercise the constitutional rights such as collective bargaining, organisation of strikes and protection of union representatives against anti-union measures. In other words, with this law, the government set up a system in which the establishment of a trade union is subjected to a prior authorisation or approval by national authorities, thus possibly hindering the functioning of trade unions themselves and the exercise of their rights.

¹¹ https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:13100:0::NO::P13100_COMMENT_ID:3962772





4.3. Social dialogue in the agri-food sector

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The laws mentioned in the previous paragraph are generally valid for any kind of company and all sectors. Concerning the agri-food sector, it is important to highlight that in Greece, the farming industry has, in general, very small farms (according to ELSTAT for 2016, there were 684,908 holdings utilising 678,702 stremmata¹² - therefore an average of 0.99 stremmata per farm holding). The employment data for the same year was 2,883,152 persons in total, including 1,168,324 farm holders and members of their family, and only 33,826 permanent workers (in just 20,752 farms), 891,798 seasonal workers, 151,613 employees involved in farmer mutual aid projects and 637,591 piece rate workers. It is understandable in this situation that most persons working in the agricultural sector also have other occupations (e.g., tourism, industry, services etc.). Those having agriculture as a main occupation are inserted into an inventory of the Ministry of Agricultural Development and Foodstuff (MADF). Some decades ago, agriculture used to be a sector, an important part of which was covered by black labour. This phenomenon has diminished substantially, since on one hand, an employer can, by using a simple bank transaction, pay social insurance for any single day of employment of a worker in agriculture, and on the other hand, the farmer has to keep accounting books and they are obliged to declare paid employment in order to calculate costs (in the opposite case, this sum would be calculated as profit).

It is also understandable that small farms have no power of negotiation. To solve this problem, most agricultural holders are members of agricultural cooperatives, following Law 2669/1993 and its amendments. There are 1173 agricultural cooperatives in the national inventory kept in the MADF. Farmers often give the crops they collect to the agricultural cooperatives, which then negotiate prices and have installations for storing and preserving crops, packaging installations, processing plants etc. Agricultural cooperatives are members of unions of agricultural cooperatives at local level or branch level (e.g., olive oil or wine), which in turn are members of the National Union of Agricultural Cooperatives (ETHEAS). ETHEAS is a member of Copa Cogeca (Committee of Professional Agricultural Organisations – General Confederation of Agricultural Cooperatives) and disseminates scientific information to farmers, promotes innovation and digitisation of farms, and delivery networks for agricultural products, and is the voice of farmers in Greece.

In companies having company-based trade unions, social dialogue takes the form of either collective bargaining or information and consultation as in any other sector of economy as described above. Apart from large firms in which trade unions exist, there is a federation of employees working in agricultural cooperatives and a federation of employees of the Ministry and its organisations.

ETHEAS has a saying for all subjects related to cooperative movement, agricultural production and local development, and contributes to the formation of law

¹² Greek unit of land area equal to 1,000 square metres.





regarding agriculture, in the formation and application of European and national policies and investment programmes.

The Greek General Workers' Confederation, through its research institute, undertakes, from time to time, studies concerning migrant workers and seasonal workers.

Social dialogue occasionally widens on the subject of migrant workers in the agri-food sector, including a broader spectrum of stakeholders e.g. migrants themselves (for example, a hunger strike on 17.2.11), the society in general, journalists with publications of articles and round table organisations, universities, farmers, the MADF, consulates of foreign countries in Greece, consulates of Greece abroad, other Ministries such as the Ministry of Labour, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Policies on Migration, the EC etc.

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4.4. Main thematic areas of social dialogue

Social dialogue in the agri-food sector in Greece articulates around several different themes.

First and foremost, as happens in all the countries analysed, wage levels and working conditions are two of the main themes on which social dialogue focuses, especially for seasonal workers. It is important to consider that, at the present, wage levels are regulated through supply/demand rules.

Another important theme that is faced through social dialogue in the country is the shortage of seasonal workers who are essential for the agri-food sector and contracted for collecting crops and planting new seasonal plants. Such shortage has the consequence of letting uncollected crops, resulting in a decrease of the overall food production and, consequently, generating economic losses. This theme, moreover, is becoming even more central, taking into account the global food crisis following the war in Ukraine and the rise of prices of food needed to be imported. Due to the complexity of the issue, its solution involves several factors such as, among others, a change and simplification of work and residence permits for migrant workers, agreements between different countries and improvement of policies concerning migration etc.

Another theme that has become central in the Greek social dialogue is the high cost of the inputs of agricultural holdings, including energy, transport, fertilisers, etc. The green transition that is currently happening in the entire EU has also entered the discussion on themes that are important for the agri-food sector, and somehow related to the cost of the inputs, such as the use of renewable energy and recycling processes.

Finally, in the last decades, the digital transition in the agri-food sector is another subject of social dialogue that has assumed ever greater importance.





5. Italy

5.1 Introduction

According to World Bank data¹³, in Italy in 2019, 3.9% of the active population is employed in agriculture.

ILO data¹⁴ shows that Italy in 2019, the last year available, registered a trade union density rate of 32.5%. The density rate is amongst the highest in the EU countries and it is surpassed only by Belgium (42.1%).

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5.2 Regulatory Framework

With the entry into force of the Constitution of the Italian Republic on 1 January 1948 and therefore, with the new discipline for the legal recognition of trade unions, the problem of the erga omnes validity of collective agreements comes to be re-proposed with all its disruptive influence. In fact, Article 39¹⁵ of the Constitution maintains the requirement of their legal personality, to which is linked the possibility of entering into collective labour agreements with mandatory effectiveness for all those belonging to the categories to which the agreement refers. As is well known, the issue of the registration and attainment of legal personality by trade union associations, and consequently, the mandatory and general effectiveness of the collective agreement signed by them is still unresolved to this day since Article 39 of the Constitutional Charter has never been implemented. In fact, the national legal system has intervened very little to regulate labour relations, but this has not prevented in any sector the development of industrial relations systems aimed at regulating labour relations, workers' rights, and employers' obligations.

The national legal system has intervened very little to regulate labour relations, and no laws have been enacted to govern the system of industrial relations and guarantee the rights of the respective actors. At the institutional level, there is not even a dedicated infrastructure: the National Council for Economics and Labour (Consiglio Nazionale dell'Economia e del Lavoro, CNEL), established by the Constitution in 1948, renewed in 1986 and through subsequent reforms, is the only body with legislative initiative and the right to contribute to the drafting of laws on

¹³ <https://databank.worldbank.org/reports.aspx?source=2&series=SL.AGR.EMPL.ZS&country=>

¹⁴ <https://ilostat ilo.org/topics/union-membership/>

¹⁵ The article 39 of the Constitution states that (free translation from the authors partner) "Trade union organisation is free. No other obligation can be imposed on trade unions than their registration with local or central offices, according to the law. It is a condition for registration that the statutes of trade unions establish an internal organisation on a democratic basis. Registered trade unions have legal personality. They may, represented as a unit in proportion to their members, conclude collective labour agreements with mandatory effect for all members of the categories to which the agreement relates".





economic and social issues in which the parties are involved in a broad sense in social dialogue.

However, this has not prevented the development of significant trade union relationships aimed at regulating employment relationships, workers' rights, and employers' obligations. The evolution of the trade union systems in Italy can be represented through a number of different historical periods.

The first period lasts from the post-war period to 1968, and is characterised by the dismissal of the Fascist collective bargaining system ("corporativism") in favour of industrial relations based on the principle of freedom of association. During this period, national collective agreements (CCNL) were the main source for the regulation of labour relationships in different economic sectors: decentralised bargaining was rare and its contents were strongly regulated by the corresponding national labour agreements.

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Decentralised collective bargaining experienced a strong surge starting from 1968: a season of vibrant union protests and claims brought to company-level collective agreements being stipulated in many Italian workplaces (mainly belonging to the industrial sector). This season came to an end with the so-called "Hot Autumn" (Autunno Caldo) of 1969 which brought significant changes to the contractual arrangements and important achievements in terms of trade union rights. In fact, in 1970, the most important legislative source in labour law was enacted: Law No. 300/1970, the Workers' Statute, which establishes the fundamental principles in this area as of today, containing "provisions on the protection of workers' freedom and dignity, freedom of trade union activity in the workplace, and provisions on employment." These provisions support the prerogatives of trade unions in companies (including the right to have trade union representation in companies employing more than 15 employees, as well as the right to impose sanctions against employers who engage in discriminatory and anti-union behaviour).

From the mid-1970s to the mid-1980s, a prolonged economic crisis, and the development of new organisational models and production techniques strongly influenced the Italian collective bargaining system, which underwent a process of "re-centralisation". During those years, national level social partners in fact stipulated a series of cross-sectoral agreements in order to contrast the rise of inflation and keep the cost of labour under control: some of those agreements (e.g., the 1983 Scotti Protocol, or the Saint Valentines' Day Agreement of 1984) were stipulated in accordance with the Italian government, giving birth to the phenomenon of "triangular bargaining" or "concertation". From 1985 on, the internationalisation of markets and the consequent need to face a stronger competition from international actors pushed Italian companies to pursue more flexible organisational solutions for what concerns their production models: this was achieved mainly through the stipulation of new company-level collective agreements, aimed at adapting the rules contained in cross-sectoral and sectoral collective agreements to different territorial and economic contexts.





The 1990s marked a new season of concertation between the Italian government and social partners, aimed at contrasting worsening economic conditions and at satisfying economic criteria established by the European Union through the Maastricht Treaty, in order to join the Eurozone. The most important document signed during that period was the 1993 “Protocollo Giugni”, which institutionalised the Italian collective bargaining system, which is still the case today (see below), and established the role of the National Collective Labour Agreements as the main instrument to adjust the purchasing power of wages to inflation.

The contents of the 1993 Agreement were confirmed by subsequent agreements signed in 2009 and 2011. The 2009 agreement was adopted in a non-unitary manner through a tripartite framework agreement between CISL, UIL, and Confindustria. The CGIL did not sign it, fearing that the agreement would open the way to a series of derogations at the company and territorial level compared to the provisions contained in the national collective agreements. However, later on, Confindustria, CGIL, CISL, and UIL signed an agreement in 2011 that stipulated that company or territorial-level bargaining cannot affect the basic elements of the employment relationship as established by national contracts. The contents of the Interconfederal Agreement of 2011 were then integrated in the so-called “Testo unico sulla Rappresentanza” (Single Text on Representation) signed in 2014 by the social partners of the industrial sector: this document provided the blueprint for the subsequent interconfederal agreements which defined collective bargaining structures and industrial relations systems in all the sectors of the Italian economy.

Today, many highlight the noticeable deterioration in social dialogue between Italian governments and social partners: several important labour reforms, for example, have been adopted without true consultation with trade unions. This phenomenon has been called “disintermediation” to emphasise its deliberate aim, i.e., to erode the role of social partners in shaping national policies.

Also, in light of the described long evolution process, the institutions and practices of social dialogue in Italy have a consolidated tradition. National collective bargaining is the main reference point, and in fact, the coverage of collective bargaining is very high in Italy (estimated at around 80%) and is guaranteed at the national level by sectoral collective agreements, which, if not applied, can be enforced – even though limitedly to their minimum wage contents - through judicial interventions. National collective bargaining can be supplemented by a second level of bargaining, often negotiated at the company level, but sometimes also at the territorial level (such as in the case of agriculture).

Italian NCLAs are usually signed by national-level social partners, i.e., employers' representative organisations and trade unions. Regarding employers' representations, these are characterised by a medium-high level of organisational density, although slightly declining since the '90s, strongly linked to the size of the companies. These organisations are divided by sector, type, size, and, in some cases, the legal form of the represented enterprises. The most important employers' organisation is Confindustria, the general confederation of Italian industries founded in 1910, which at the end of 2018, covered over 5.4 million employers. Confindustria





encompasses 15 sector federations, 19 regional associations, and 71 territorial associations. Confapi, the Italian confederation of medium and small private industries, claims more than 80,000 associated companies. Confcommercio declares more than 650,000 signing members and Confesercenti has over 350,000 small and medium members operating in trade, tourism, services, craftsmanship, and industry. In the cooperative sector, there is Legacoop, representing more than 15,000 cooperatives, Confcooperative with 18,500 cooperatives and social enterprises, and AGCI- Associazione Generale Cooperative Italiane. In the agricultural sector, the main organisations are Confagricoltura, which claims to organise two-thirds of all companies in the sector and covers more than 500,000 employees, Coldiretti, and CIA- Agricoltori Italiani. On the other hand, at the public level, there is only one organisation for employers: ARAN. The fragmentation of employers' representation in the private sector has contributed, even more than the fragmentation of trade unions, to an abnormal proliferation of national collective agreements.

With regard to unions, the most important trade union confederations are CGIL (Italian General Confederation of Labour), CISL (Italian Confederation of Trade Unions) and UIL (Italian Union of Labour), affiliated to the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC), which represent the vast majority of workers and sign the most applied sectoral National Collective Labour Agreements (NCLAs); however, smaller trade union confederations, such as UGL (General Union of Labour), CONFSAL (General Confederation of Autonomous Trade Unions) and CISAL (Italian Confederation of Autonomous Trade Unions), and autonomous unions also play a significant role in the industrial relations scenario. The branch federations of CGIL, CISL and UIL active in the agri-food sectors are FLAI-CGIL, FAI-CISL and UILA-UIL.

5.3. Social dialogue in the agri-food sector

Social dialogue in agriculture refers to the process of communication, collaboration, and negotiation between different stakeholders in the agricultural sector, including farmers, workers, cooperatives, and government institutions. In Italy, social dialogue in agriculture plays an important role in shaping agricultural policies, improving working conditions and wages for agricultural workers, and promoting sustainable and competitive agriculture.

One of the key challenges facing social dialogue in agriculture in Italy is the fragmentation of the agricultural sector, with a large number of small-scale farmers and cooperatives, which can make it difficult to reach consensus and negotiate effectively. Another challenge is the limited involvement of women in the sector, who are often underrepresented in decision-making and have limited access to resources and opportunities. Lastly, the high percentage of migrants working in agriculture often constitutes an obstacle to unionisation, given the several difficulties trade unions face in involving them in their representation activities.

To address these challenges, it is important to promote a more inclusive and participatory approach to social dialogue in agriculture, including the involvement of women and marginalised groups in the decision-making process. This can be





achieved through the creation of new platforms for dialogue and collaboration, such as rural networks and farmer organisations, as well as through capacity-building and training programs to help women and other marginalised groups to participate in the social dialogue process.

As for what concerns Italian social partners active in the agricultural sector, a distinction must be made between the main employers' representative organizations (Confagricoltura, Coldiretti, CIA) and trade union federations (Flai-CGIL, Fai-CISL, Uila-UIL). While the former exclusively represent the interests of the employers of the agricultural sector, the latter instead represent both agricultural and food industry workers.

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The productive complexity of the national agricultural sector, which differs in terms of production systems, company size, and geographical location, has led the agricultural social partners to 'build' a system of collective bargaining that, while emanating from a national contract, is in fact disjointed at the provincial level, precisely in order to be better able to grasp the specificities, needs and requirements of companies and workers in terms of wages, welfare and contractual protection. Indeed, the decentralised territorial contract reflects a snapshot of the territory with its peculiarities, fully mirroring the social, economic, and employment reality influenced by companies and, consequently, workers. At the moment, about 95 provincial collective agreements are currently in force on the Italian territory. Bilateral bodies also play an important role for what concerns social dialogue in the Italian agricultural sector, and are established both at the national and territorial level.

The National Agricultural Bilateral Institution (EBAN) is composed of the national organisations of agricultural employers (Confagricoltura, Coldiretti, and Cia) and the national organisations of agricultural workers (Flai-Cgil, Fai-Cisl, and Uila-Uil) that sign the NCLA for agricultural and floricultural workers.

EBAN has assumed tasks previously carried out by multiple bodies: the National Observatory, Agriform, the National Joint Commission for equal opportunities, and the National Joint Committee for health and safety at work. EBAN also provides supplementary health services in addition to those offered by the National Health Service to agricultural and floricultural workers. These services are provided through a dedicated supplementary health fund called FISA which is established at the national level and "provides supplementary services to public healthcare with health, accident prevention and social objectives. Employer contributions, which have been 0.30% of taxable wages for permanent employees and 0.60% for fixed-term employees since January 1, 2014, are required for enrollment in the fund, while no employee contributions are required. Benefits can also be requested on behalf of the enrollee's family members. Insurance coverage applies in cases of illness and also covers medical expenses related to accidents, within the limits specified in the regulations. Medical benefits include, for example, hospitalisation (regardless of whether the individual has undergone surgery), outpatient dermatological or ophthalmological surgeries, specialist visits, blood tests (up to 200 euros per year), orthopedic and hearing prosthetics, and dental care resulting from accidents.





At the territorial level, experiences in this regard have been numerous and widespread throughout the national territory since the 1950s-1960s, with the establishment of non-legal funds (*Casse extra legem*) that fulfill mutual assistance and income integration tasks assigned to them through provincial bargaining. These funds have now been replaced by Territorial Bilateral Institutions (EBAT).

The numerous functions attributed to EBAN and EBAT show how representative organisations in the agricultural sector have seized the opportunities offered by the current regulatory framework, which assigns subsidiary functions, and in some cases, even substitutive functions to social partners in the areas of the labour market, safety, health, training, and income integration. This is the result of extensive labour relations and social dialogue aimed at providing better services and protections to workers, ensuring greater and more effective forms of social protection.

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5.4. Main thematic areas of social dialogue

Social dialogue in Italy deals with a large variety of topics, especially within the context of the agricultural sector. Other than the traditional topics of the protection of workers' purchasing power through the adaptation of wages to the cost of living and OHS safeguards for workers employed in particularly harmful occupations, social partners often discuss the regulation of atypical contractual arrangements – for example seasonal, fixed-term work and agency work which interest a large percentage of Italian agricultural workers and companies.

Another very common topic to be found in provincial-level collective agreements is the description of the role and functions of territorial bilateral bodies (see above) and their methods of financing, usually entailing contributions from both employers and workers.

It is also to be noted how, during the last few years, several measures connected to work-life balance started to be included in Italian provincial collective agreements, despite “welfare” measures being mostly provided by bilateral bodies; these are to be identified mostly with additional (compared with those already identified in NCLAs) periods of paid leave for workers with specific necessities concerning training, childcare, or their health status.

Italian territorial social partners are recently pushing towards the adoption of measures to contrast the exploitation and the often-poor living conditions of migrant workers, for example by stipulating agreements with public bodies on the matter, in accordance with Law 199/2016 (commonly known as the Law against gang masters, informal work and labour exploitation in agriculture) which explicitly foresees the involvement of bilateral bodies on the topic. Lastly, tackling the issue of informal work and violence against women are also at the centre of the Italian social partners' agenda (ADAPT, 2022).





6. North Macedonia

6.1. Introduction

According to World Bank data¹⁶, in North Macedonia in 2019 which is the last year available, 13.9% of the active population was employed in agriculture, well above the EU average.

ILO data¹⁷ shows that North Macedonia in 2019, the last year available, registered a quite low trade union density rate of 16.7%. T

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When studying the evolution of social dialogue in the context of North Macedonia, one must consider its political history, especially in post-World War II. After the end of the war, the current territory of North Macedonia was part of the newly renamed Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia as one of the six constituent republics. The Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia, established in 1945, was ruled by Tito's communist party until his death in 1980. Finally, North Macedonia became independent in 1991.

Even if inspired at the beginning by the political and economic Soviet model, after the break with Stalin in 1948, Yugoslavia abandoned the planned economy model in favour of a market socialist model in which domestic and international production and exchange coexisted with socialist elements such as social ownership and workers' self-management of firms (Estrin, 1991). Such a system seemed to work quite well until the end of the 1970s. However, until Yugoslavia's dissolution in 1989, Yugoslav workers' self-management underwent and evolved through four different phases: administrative socialism (1945–1952), administrative market socialism (1953–1962), market socialism (1963–1973), and contractual socialism (1974–1988) (Széll, 2019). The basis of such self-management was represented by workers' councils.

From the 1950s, in fact, employees exerted their influence through Workers' Councils that had the power to appoint managers, fix pay structures and determine recruitment procedures and firms' surplus between investment and wage (Estrin, 1983). Moreover, the Workers' Councils also shared the authority for enterprise decisions concerning production, financial, and investment plans which needed their approval (Comisso, 1987). In such a context, trade unions were not independent. Rather, they operated as a transmission belt between the party and the workers (Széll, 2019). At the same time, in Yugoslavia, no employers' associations, as defined by ILO, were present.

The situation completely changed with the fall of Tito's regime, the dissolution of Yugoslavia and the formation of the independent Macedonia in 1991. In 1996, through a tripartite agreement between the government and the social partners, the Economic and Social Council (ESC) was established. It is worth mentioning that at that time, no employers' association was present in North Macedonia (at least

¹⁶ <https://databank.worldbank.org/reports.aspx?source=2&series=SL.AGR.EMPL.ZS&country=>

¹⁷ <https://ilostat ilo.org/topics/union-membership/>





considering the ILO's definition of employers' association) and that the agreement was signed by the Business/Economic Chamber (Guardiancich and Molina, 2019).

The ESC, however, due to a vagueness in representativeness criteria and lack of political will, functioned quite intermittently at least until 2010 when a new agreement was signed by social partners, including employers' organisations that were formed in the meantime. The reformed ESC works as a forum in which social partners can discuss socio-economic themes and issues.

Finally, when analysing the social dialogue in North Macedonia, it is important to consider the concept of a representative trade union that strongly influences its practical functioning. In fact, the legislation of North Macedonia states that only those trade unions and employees associations that meet the representative criteria, namely that represent a certain share of workers that are members of unions (or employers' associations), have the right to enter into collective bargaining and to conclude collective agreements (Kalamatiev and Ristovski, 2012). Until 2005, the representative criteria stated that only those associations that represented the majority of the workers (or employers) had the right to participate in collective bargaining. The Labour Relation Law of 2005 reduced the required representativeness to 33%, giving space for new associations to participate in collective bargaining and collective agreements. The amendments of the Labour Relation Law of 2010 further changed the situation by introducing four types of representativeness according to different levels of social dialogue. At national level, the minimum threshold for representativeness of trade unions would be at least 10% of the total number of employees in North Macedonia paying union membership fees, and at least 5% for employers' organisations.

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6.2. Regulatory Framework

In North Macedonia, social dialogue as a legal-social content appears in several national documents such as:

- The Constitution¹⁸.
- The Labour Relations Law¹⁹.
- The agreement on the establishment of the Economic and Social Council at the national level from 2010, and the agreements on the establishment of the local economic and social councils²⁰.

In the Republic of North Macedonia, social dialogue is a key and necessary tool in the modelling of industrial relations, and a major challenge and a goal for social partners.

The Constitution of the Republic of North Macedonia guarantees the economic and social rights of the citizens, for whom protection and advancement a social dialogue arer conducted. Article 20 regulates citizens' freedom of association.

¹⁸ <https://www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/docs/ELECTRONIC/36714/70972/F511737559/MKD36714%20Eng.pdf>

¹⁹ <https://www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/docs/MONOGRAPH/71332/109716/F-1464727386/MKD71332%20Eng.pdf>

²⁰ https://www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/natlex4.detail?p_lang=en&p_isn=107766





According to this Article, citizens have the right to freedom of association in order to exercise and protect their political, economic, social, cultural rights and convictions. Citizens have the right to form trade unions to exercise their economic and social rights. The law may restrict the exercising of trade union rights in the armed forces, police and administrative bodies. Even though the Constitution of North Macedonia does not explicitly provide for the right to collective bargaining, this right is indirectly referred to under Article 32 according to which employees' rights and their position is regulated by law and collective agreements.

At the same time, Article 37 protects the right to establish and join trade unions: *"In order to exercise their economic and social rights, citizens have the right to establish trade unions. Trade unions can constitute confederations and become members of international trade union organisations. The law may restrict the conditions for the exercising of the right to a trade union organisation in the armed forces, the police and administrative bodies"*.

Article 38 guarantees the right to strike. According to this Article, *"The right to strike is guaranteed. The law may restrict the conditions for the exercising of the right to strike in the armed forces, the police and administrative bodies"*.

Besides the Constitution, the Labour Relations Law regulates the national regulatory framework for industrial relations and the functioning of the social dialogue at the bipartite and tripartite level. It contains the rules for the functioning of workers' organisations and employers' organisations, as well as for collective bargaining between the two parties. The law established a legal framework for the powers and composition of the Economic and Social Council.

With the amendments to the Law on Labour Relations in 2010, the conditions for representativeness of trade unions and employers' associations were determined for the purpose of participation in the social dialogue. In accordance with these law amendments, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy issued a decision on representativeness to the Federation of Trade Unions of Macedonia, the Confederation of Free Trade Unions and the Organisation of Employers of Macedonia. The representative social partners and the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia, in August 2010, signed a new Agreement on the Economic and Social Council, with the support of the ILO.

In the Republic of North Macedonia, tripartism is one of the basic forms of social dialogue, a modern model for the preventive resolution of social conflicts which is a tripartite cooperation between the government, the employers and the workers. The tripartite social dialogue takes place through the Economic and Social Council. Within the Council, the work representatives of the representative trade unions and employers' associations participate with representatives of the government at the appropriate levels of state organisation. The involvement of the government in the social dialogue manifests itself in multiple roles, as a mediator and regulator of the dialogue, but also in the function of a public entrepreneur and employer.

SSM, the Federation of trade unions of Macedonia, is the biggest representative national federation of trade unions, and is one of the partners in the tripartite social dialogue in North Macedonia. According to SSM, it should be a generally accepted





thesis that in order for there to be an effective tripartite consultation, the representatives of workers and employers, above all, should enjoy the right to freedom of association and equality to express their interests, and defend them with arguments and counterarguments.

Apart from the tripartite one, there is also a bipartite social dialogue. Bipartite social dialogue occurs when two parties, one or more employers and/or one or more employers' organisations and one or more workers' organisations exchange information, consult or negotiate, without government intervention. For example, it could be about wages, working conditions or health and safety in the workplace, as well as wider economic and social issues.

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It can be at branch (sectoral) or at employers' level. Main objective: to encourage consensus building between the main actors of the labour domain. The meaning of social dialogue presupposes that the actors possess a culture of compromise. The intervention of the state is excessive and it is the subject of many debates.

In enterprises, the social dialogue mainly covers the formal relations between the company and the employees, that is, between the manager or their representatives, and the staff representatives at several organisational levels. The basic mission of the social dialogue in the company is the implementation of the consensus between the various parties participating in the debates. More specifically, the social dialogue enables efficient resolution of the main economic and social problems in the company, promotion of good management, social stability and economic development of the organisation.

The need to institutionalise tripartism at the national level and establish economic and social councils (regional bodies) became relevant in the mid-1990s. ESSs were established as advisory bodies that, at the request of the government or parliament, provide opinions, advice and recommendations on economic and social policies, draft laws and draft national development strategies. In addition, the ESS, on its own initiative, prepares opinions on key economic and social issues. The Ministry of Labour and Social Policy represents the interests and the views of the Government in the social dialogue due to its competence - the direct connection to labour issues (employment policy, labour relations, professional training, inspection labour supervision, etc.). This Ministry is responsible for providing resources to support the social dialogue process (meeting costs and secretariat costs). For the efficient performance of its functions in this part, the Ministry continuously conducts activities for building its capacities.

In the tripartite social dialogue at the national level, other ministries are also involved, according to the topics that are being discussed. Experts and the civil society sector in the social dialogue can take part in the inter-party social dialogue at the national level, contributing to finding a compromise in cases when the social partners cannot reach a consensus on certain issues. External expertise is provided by independent experts and members of the academic community which are in the process of consultation and negotiation (due to the complexity of many issues considered in tripartite processes), they can be crucial in decision-making and effective responses to questions raised by tripartite partners.





The partners in the tripartite social dialogue can include the civil society when there is a need for it, that is, when a consensus needs to be reached on issues outside the sphere of labour (such as environmental protection or the needs of specific or vulnerable groups). Decisions made by consensus during the tripartite social dialogue, in principle, are not made by voting, but by reaching a consensus, in conditions of a favourable atmosphere and the collective will of all involved parties to reach an agreement of mutual interest. Until a decision acceptable to all parties in the social dialogue is reached, consultations and negotiations are carried out.

6.3. Social dialogue in the agri-food sector

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On a tripartite level, the ESC works like a forum bringing the social partners to discuss socio-economic issues and has no research or analytical capacities. The ESC is issuing opinions, proposals and recommendations on a restricted number of topics relative to the breadth of its mandate, i.e. economic development, labour market policies, wage and price policies in the field of labour and social insurance, social protection, healthcare, environment, fiscal policy, working conditions, occupational safety, and health, education, culture, professional development, vocational training and other fields of economic and social interest of the employers and workers. In addition, it determines the composition of tripartite delegations to the International Labour Conference (ILC) and issues proposals for the ratification of International Labour Standards.²¹

However, on a bipartite level, especially, and on a branch/sectoral and employer level, the main form of social dialogue is collective bargaining. This includes the agri-food sector.

Being the only representative trade union with a licence to enter into collective bargaining in the agri-food sector, Agro-Sindikát has had a leading role in the country in terms of the number of concluded branch collective agreements in the activities it covers, as well as concluded collective agreements at the employer level in more than 50% of companies.

The tradition of collective bargaining in the Agro-Sindikát dates back to 1993 and is a basic weapon in the operation. Greater successes in collective bargaining have been achieved in the last 10 years, when modern and legally compliant collective agreements have been concluded, in which far greater rights have been established for workers than those in the law. Agro-Sindikát has two active branch collective agreements, one pertaining to employers and employees in the agriculture and food industry, and the other to the tobacco industry. In the branch collective agreements, Agro-Sindikát managed to establish higher minimum wages, and thus, higher complexity groups in job positions, then higher percentages for payments for overtime, work on holidays, Sundays and night work, and annual compensation was determined in maximum amounts. In these collective agreements, it is also possible for the severance pay in case of business surplus being higher than the one in the law. This was used in the collective agreements at the

²¹ https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---europe/---ro-geneva/---sro-budapest/documents/publication/wcms_744279.pdf





employer level to pay it in the amount of a dozen salaries, and even more in better-off companies

Unfortunately, such successes in collective bargaining until 2015 caused a large outflow of membership of companies from activities from the Employers' Organisation, which contributed to the complete extinction of the associations of the Organisation, and thus the non-existence of a social partner with which branch collective agreements would be concluded. Branch collective agreements continue to be valid, but, since there are no new negotiations, the solutions in them become obsolete, especially with regards to wages, but also with regards to positive legal solutions. However, the unenviable position in relation to branch collective agreements did not discourage the maintenance of the social dialogue at the employer level. Despite the difficulties related to the pandemic and the political climate in the country, the process of collective bargaining at the employer level continued. In almost all subsidiaries of Agro-Sindikát in which there was an existing collective agreement, the agreement was extended and improved.

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6.4 Main thematic areas of social dialogue

The topics included in the tripartite social dialogue at the national level in the ESC:

- Labour relations;
- Labour legislation;
- Wages (including the determination of the minimum wage);
- Resolving labour disputes of national importance;
- Freedom of association and collective bargaining;
- Economic policy issues (productivity and economic competitiveness, taxes and fiscal policy);
- Poverty reduction and eradication;
- Creating employment opportunities;
- Labour market policy;
- Education and training; gender equality;
- Social insurance and protection (reforms in social and pension insurance, maternity protection);
- Working conditions;
- Working hours;
- Parental leave;
- International labour standards and ILO programmes;
- National decent work programmes;
- National strategies (e.g., The national strategy for agriculture and rural development);²²
- Definition and implementation of anti-crisis measures and reforms, etc.

²² <https://www.fao.org/faolex/results/details/en/c/LEX-FAOC209144>





7. Spain

7.1 Introduction

According to World Bank data²³, the most recent analysis in Spain in 2019 revealed that 4.2% of the active population was employed in agriculture.

ILO data²⁴ shows that in 2019 Spain registered a quite low trade union density rate of 12.4%.

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As far as the development of social dialogue in Spain is concerned, it is important to consider that it evolved starting from the fall of the Francoist authoritarian regime in 1975. This is important because the reaction to the fall of the authoritarian regime shaped the way in which social dialogue has been understood and practiced in the following decades. The process of construction of social dialogue in Spain can be traced back to 1977 when the right of free association and striking were firstly granted and regulated.

At the same time, Spain went through the ratification of the convention of the International Labour Organisation concerning unions and collective bargaining. The compulsory unionisation that composed what was called “vertical unions” was removed, and employers’ organisations were closed, substituting them with the current “Confederación Española de Organizaciones”.

Between 1977 and 1984, the very first pacts were signed in the Spanish context. The Moncloa Pacts, in which the principal political parties, the employers’ associations and the unions (Comisiones Obreras (Workers’ Commissions)) and Union General de Trabajadores (General Union of Workers)) participated were signed in 1977 and became effective in 1978. The process included the signing of other pacts: the ABI in 1979, the AMI in 1980, the ANE in 1982, the AI in 1983, and lastly, the AES in 1984.

When the AES expired in 1986, Spain experienced a long period in which no agreements were in place. This period lasted until 1994 and it is considered as the first Spanish crisis of social dialogue.

Between 1991 and 1994, in the context of a slow-down of the Spanish economy, the government presented a highly criticised labour reform that introduced several changes in collective concertation, introducing what have been called “trash contracts”. As a response, at the beginning of 1994, trade unions organised a general strike and this triggered a revival of social dialogue but in a different form where big pacts paved the way to agreements on specific issues. At the same time, this development produced a change in which negotiations between firms and workers began to play a major role, with a reduced intervention of the governments.

Between 1994 and 2003, Spain experienced another phase of social dialogue. This timespan, which was marked by another favorable economic cycle, was

²³ <https://databank.worldbank.org/reports.aspx?source=2&series=SL.AGR.EMPL.ZS&country=>

²⁴ <https://ilostat.ilo.org/topics/union-membership/>





characterised by the consolidation of the tendency of signing specific agreements between the governments and the social partners rather than by the bigger agreements that characterised the previous social dialogue practices. The “Acuerdo Interconfederal para la Estabilidad del Empleo” (Interconfederal Agreement for Job Stability) signed in 1997 is the most relevant agreement of this period. The agreement was then translated into a State law by the PP government. In this phase, it became evident how the implementation of social dialogue was also dependent on the support that a political party received in the elections. In this sense, in Spain, one observes a situation in which the larger is the majority held by a government, the higher is the tendency of the government to implement norms that are not negotiated with social partners.

In 2001, the large majority PP government formed, showing a very low attitude to negotiations, and implemented the so-called “decretazo” (modifying the laws concerning unemployment protection) that marked a breaking point into social dialogue negotiations in the country. This rupture gave impetus to another general strike that pushed the government to reform the recently implemented norms in 2002.

After the PSOE won the 2004 elections, social dialogue experienced a new period of expansion, starting from the Declaration for Social Dialogue signed in 2004 by the government and social partners at country level: the Workers’ Commissions (CCOO) and the General Union of Workers (UTG) contributed from the unions’ side and the Confederación Española de Organizaciones Empresariales (Spanish Confederation of Company Organisations) (CEOE) and the Confederación Española de la Pequeña y Mediana Empresa (Spanish Confederation of Small and Medium-sized Companies) (CEPYME) from the employers’ side.

A new model of social dialogue arose from the declaration, focusing on labour law but also on other distinct issues such as equality and conciliation, the low employment rates and the high level of temporary employment. This process produced several results concerning legislative, labour and social development. Between 2004 and 2008, more than 20 agreements concerning several distinct matters were signed. However, this period of social dialogue development was abruptly interrupted by the economic crisis that hit Spain, as well as many other western and non-western countries, in 2008. The crisis, in fact, marked another period in which social dialogue was set aside.

The 2008 economic crisis exploded in a period in which the Spanish economy was experiencing a sustained and prolonged period of growth. The explosion of the housing bubble (sector that stimulated the Spanish growth for a long time) and the crisis of the financial markets caused a deep and prolonged period of stagnation. Such a crisis had multiple effects on the Spanish economy: a deep collapse of the internal demand, the destruction of employment and high levels of unemployment, a consistent reduction of the GDP, and a general worsening of the principal macroeconomic indicators. At the same time, issues that were already present in the Spanish system worsened: labour precarisation, income inequality and poverty as well as social exclusion increased sharply. All these factors affected social





dialogue but also trade unions in general. During these years, the tendency to conclude two types of agreements emerged: the Interconfederal for Collective Negotiation and the Bilateral Concertation. In 2007, the Interconfederal Agreement for Collective Bargaining was signed between CEOE and CEPYME, and CC. OO and UGT with annual validity. However, the high level of unemployment registered that year resulted in the fact that the agreement was not renewed. In 2010, a new declaration between the social parties was signed to be valid until 2012, but the worsening of the economic crisis put a halt to the further steps needed to enforce it, and the government decided to go through a reform of collective negotiation in 2011 without the inclusion of the social parties. Until 2014, unemployment rates increased up to 26% and the bilateral social dialogue produced the second Agreement for Employment and Collective Negotiation.

7.2 Regulatory Framework

Social dialogue regulation in the national Spanish legal system is minimum, and there are few national laws regulating it (Iglesias, 2020). Notwithstanding that, more detailed social dialogue regulations can be found at regional level as in the case of Castilla y Leon, Aragon, and the Rioja.

At national level, first and foremost, the Spanish Constitution²⁵ of 1978 put in place some presuppositions that allowed social dialogue to be undertaken. According to Article 1.2, "*National sovereignty resides in the Spanish people, from whom the powers of the state emanate*", this means that all national powers are based on the people and therefore on the society. At the same time, according to Article 23.1 "*Citizens have the right to participate in public affairs, directly or through representatives, freely chosen in periodic elections by universal suffrage.*", giving Spanish citizens the right to participate in political public life. The Spanish constitution also contains several articles that foresee trade unions' existence and workers' participation, providing the legal basis for the implementation of social dialogue. Firstly, Article 7.1 stipulates that "*Workers' unions and business associations contribute to the defence and promotion of their own economic and social interests. Their creation and the exercise of their activity are free within the respect for the Constitution and the law. Their internal structure and operation must be democratic*". Article 7, therefore, on the one side, enshrines freedom of association as a fundamental right and recognises the importance of labour relations and, in general, of the most representative trade unions and business organisations in economic and social life, while, on the other side, it explicitly claims that such associations must be democratic, meaning that they must operate with democratic mechanisms. The stress placed on the fact that the constitution acknowledges that such organisations must function following democratic norms and principles is particularly important as it provides a legal basis for only the most representative unions to concur to the ratification of collective agreements.

²⁵ <https://www.boe.es/buscar/act.php?id=BOE-A-1978-31229>





Furthermore, according to Article 131.2, *“The Government will prepare the planning of projects, in accordance with the forecasts provided by the Autonomous Communities and the advice and collaboration of the unions and other professional, business and economic organisations. For this purpose, a Council will be constituted, whose composition and functions will be developed by law”*. In some sense, therefore, by contemplating unions' and employers' associations' consultation within the programming functions of the government, through Article 131, the Spanish constitution seems to recognise social dialogue as a pillar of the Spanish state, especially when applied in combination with Article 7.

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Apart from the constitution, at the national level, there are then several laws that, in some way, regulate social dialogue.

Organic Law 11/1985²⁶, enforced on 2 August, amended several times and the last time in 2011, regulates unions' freedom and unions' functioning, while in some sense, setting up some aspects of social dialogue. In particular, for what concerns social dialogue, this law defines the concept of the *“most representative”* union, which in the Spanish context is particularly important since such unions are those entitled to sign binding agreements at national, local and firm levels.

The Estatuto de los Trabajadores (Statute of Workers)²⁷, approved in 2015 and amended in 2022, further clarifies some aspects. Article 3.1 postulates that *“rights and obligations related to labour relations will be regulated by national laws, collective agreements, and individual contracts that cannot, in any way, derogate to national laws and collective agreements”*. Article 3.1 therefore clarifies the hierarchy of laws, while allowing for the formation of several kinds of norms regulating social dialogue. Article 4, in accordance with the Spanish Constitution, reiterates that workers have the rights, among others, to join trade unions, to participate in collective bargaining and to strike.

Article 17.1 clarifies that *“all the norms, pacts and collective agreements will be considered null if resulting to be directly or indirectly discriminatory in terms of race, sex, racial or ethnic origin, marital status, social condition, religious beliefs or belonging, political thoughts, sexual orientation or whether or not member of a trade union”*. At the same time, according to Article 17.4, *“Without prejudice to the provisions of the preceding sections, collective bargaining may establish positive action measures to promote women's access to all professions. For this purpose, it may establish reservations and preferences in the contracting conditions so that, under equal conditions of suitability, people of the least represented sex in the professional group in question have preference to be hired”*.

Furthermore, Title II regulates collective representation and reunion rights within the firm. Article 62 and 63 state that workers within firms with more than 10 and less than 50 workers may elect a personnel's delegate, and a firm committee. Article 64.1 points out that *“the firm committee has the right to be informed about all matters that may affect workers, as well as about firm conditions”*. Article 64.2 clarifies that

²⁶ <https://www.boe.es/buscar/act.php?id=BOE-A-1985-16660>

²⁷ https://www.boe.es/biblioteca_juridica/abrir_pdf.php?id=PUB-DT-2022-139





“The works council will have the right to be informed quarterly: a) On the general evolution of the economic sector to which the company belongs; b) On the economic situation of the company and the recent and probable evolution of its activities, including environmental actions that have a direct impact on employment, as well as on production and sales, including the production program; c) On the forecasts of the employer for entering into new contracts, being indicated the number of these and the modalities and types that will be used, including part-time contracts and the completion of additional hours by workers hired part-time, and subcontracting cases; d) On the statistics on the rate of absenteeism and the causes, accidents at work and occupational diseases and their consequences, accident rates, periodic or special studies of the work environment and the prevention mechanisms used”.

Finally, Title III gets to the heart of the social dialogue by regulating collective negotiation and collective bargaining. Article 82.1 dictates that *“The collective agreements, as a result of the negotiation carried out by the representatives of the workers and the employers, constitute the expression of the agreement freely adopted by them by virtue of their collective autonomy”*, Article 82.2 reiterates that by collective agreements, workers and employers regulate working conditions and productivity through the obligations that are discussed and accepted by the parties. Article 82.3 makes it clear that collective agreements *“regulated by this law bind all employers and workers included within its scope of application and during the entire time of its validity”*. However, the binding nature of collective agreements envisaged by this article is somehow weakened by the fact that it also states that when economic, technical, organisational or production causes occur, employers and employees’ representatives can suspend the conditions of the collective agreement, whether at sectoral or firm level, within a certain firm. According to Article 82.3, *“the conditions that can be suspended could be related to: a) Working day; b) Schedule and distribution of working time; c) Shift work regime; d) Remuneration system and salary amount; e) System of work and performance; f) Functions, when they exceed the limits for functional mobility provided for in article 39; and g) Voluntary improvements in the protective action of Social Security”*.

Article 87.1 explains who is entitled to negotiate collective agreements. In particular, this article declares that it is legitimate to negotiate *“On behalf of the workers, the company committee, the personnel delegates, if applicable, or the union sections, if any, which, as a whole, add up to the majority of committee members”*. Article 87.2 indicates who is entitled to negotiate collective agreements and represent workers in sectoral agreements: *“a) The unions that are considered to be the most representative at the state level, as well as, in their respective areas, the union organisations affiliated, federated or confederated to them; b) The unions that are considered to be the most representative at the autonomous community level with respect to the agreements that do not transcend said territorial area, as well as, in their respective areas, the affiliated, federated or confederated union organisations to them; c) Unions that have a minimum of ten percent of the members of the company committees or personnel delegates in the geographical and functional scope to which the agreement refers”*. At the same time, Article 87.3 regulates who





is entitled to negotiate from the employers' side: *“On behalf of the employers, the following will be entitled to negotiate: a) In company or lower level agreements, the employer themselves; b) In company group agreements and those that affect a plurality of companies linked for organisational or productive reasons, and identified by name in their scope of application, the representation of said companies; c) In sectoral collective agreements, the business associations that, in the geographical and functional scope of the agreement, have ten percent of the employers, in the sense of article 1.2, and provided that they give employment to the same percentage of the affected workers, as well as those business associations that in said area give employment to fifteen percent of the affected workers. In those sectors in which there are no business associations that are sufficiently representative, as provided for in the previous paragraph, state-level business associations that have ten percent or more will be entitled to negotiate the corresponding sectoral collective agreements of the companies or workers at the state level, as well as the business associations of the autonomous community that have a minimum of fifteen percent of the companies or workers in it.”*

Finally, Article 87.5 dictates that *“Every union, union federation or confederation, and every business association that meets the legitimacy requirement, will have the right to be part of the negotiating commission”*. However, Article 88.2 establishes minimum levels of participation needed to be able to engage in negotiations: *“The negotiating commission will be validly constituted when the unions, federations or confederations and the business associations referred to in the previous article represent at least, respectively, the absolute majority of the members of the company committees and personnel delegates, as the case may be, and the employers who employ the majority of the workers affected by the agreement.”*

7.3. Social dialogue in the agri-food sector

Within the Spanish system, when social dialogue results in agreements, it leads to laws such as the increase in pensions and labour reform.

On other occasions, social dialogue results in the creation of tripartite roundtables to address issues such as a pact for industry. It also leads to other results so that the issues dealt with in the social dialogue are debated in the different parliaments (national, regional, provincial and local), as has happened this year with the drought and the lack of water for agricultural activities, etc.

Social dialogue in Spain is present at all levels, but mainly at the national level. It covers all issues that affect workers, such as the minimum wage, pensions, working hours, the environment, ecological transition, industrial policy, improvement of rights (labour reform), etc. The main actors of social dialogue active in the Spanish agricultural sector are CEOE (cross-sectoral) on the employers' side and UGT-FICA and CCOO de Industria on the trade unions' side.

There are also aspects specifically related to the agri-food sector, which are dealt with through sectoral social dialogue. In the agricultural sector and in relation to migratory flows, there is an agreement between the General State Administration, the Ministry of Inclusion, Social Security and Migration, the agricultural employers'





organisations and the most representative trade unions in the agricultural sector. The purpose of the agreement is to establish collaboration between the signatory entities in order to ensure effective management of internal and external labour migration flows in the agricultural sector, so that the necessary workers are available at all times and in all places, to guarantee compliance with labour and immigration regulations, working conditions and accommodation, when necessary, and to provide adequate information and advice on social and labour rights and obligations.

This agreement gives rise to the Central Commission for migratory flows in seasonal campaigns, as well as the provincial commissions in which representatives of the organisations signing the agreement participate. The Central Commission will be responsible for promoting the execution of the Agreement, ensuring compliance with its objectives and coordinating the actions of the Provincial Commissions. The Provincial Commissions are responsible for carrying out the following actions:

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- To analyse, qualitatively and quantitatively, the proposals made by companies in the sector or their representative organisations for the recruitment of migrant workers, giving priority to job seekers available on the domestic market.
- To monitor and evaluate the development of the campaigns, indicating the labour activity covered by workers, the deviation of the contracted workforce with respect to that initially planned, the productivity achieved, the conditions of accommodation and the functioning of the health and social and labour integration mechanisms.
- To make proposals that allow for a better organisation of the campaigns and a more efficient and effective use of migrant labour. To this end, when the Directorate General for Migration is requested to carry out a selection process for foreign workers at origin, so that it can assess the advisability of carrying it out, the corresponding Provincial Commission must issue a report assessing the proposal. This report shall not be binding, but shall be mandatory with respect to those offers that, exceeding a certain number of jobs and in accordance with the regulations in force at any given time, must be authorised by the Directorate General for Migration.
- To submit to the Central Commission such reports, studies and proposals as they consider appropriate for the fulfilment of the objectives of the Agreement.
- To carry out all work, studies and reports entrusted to them by the Central Commission.
- To forward the notice of each meeting and the minutes of each meeting to the Central Commission.

In the area of training, there are the Sectoral Joint Training Committees which are part of the governance structure of the Employment Training System and are the institutional participation bodies of the employers' and trade union organisations in the area of training. They are set up through collective agreements or specific agreements, and are made up of the most representative employers' and trade





union organisations in sectoral collective bargaining at the national level. Their main functions are:

- To draw up operating regulations for each sector.
- To be aware of the vocational training for employment that is carried out in each sector and to establish the criteria and general priorities of the training offer, participating, in turn, in activities related to studies, sectoral research or contributions and proposals related to the National System of Qualifications and Vocational Training, and the National Reference Centres, carrying out an annual report that compiles these activities.
- To mediate in discrepancies arising between the company management and the legal representation of the workers with regard to training carried out through the initiative of in-company training actions.

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In the agri-food sector, there are 7 sectoral joint training commissions: canned vegetables, poultry and other animal farms, meat industries, food and beverage industry; poultry and rabbit slaughterhouses, agricultural, forestry and livestock sector; production, handling, packaging for trade and export of citrus fruits, fruits, vegetables, flowers and live plants.

In relation to the prevention of occupational risks, there is a working group in the agricultural sector within the National Institute for Health and Safety at Work, which includes agricultural organisations, trade unions and the public administration, both at national and Autonomous Community level. The aim of this working group is to study and monitor the application of preventive regulations in the agricultural sector, and its work is oriented towards the study of the most frequent causes of accidents and work-related illnesses in the agricultural sector, as well as the drawing up of proposals for the development of effective occupational risk prevention in the agricultural sector.

In the agri-food sector and in relation to the functioning of the food chain, there is a Food Chain Observatory. This is a collegiate body, attached to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food through the Directorate General for the Food Industry, as established in Article 19 of Law 12/2013 of 2 August 2013 on measures to improve the functioning of the food chain. Once Royal Decree 64/2015 of 6 February 2015, partially implementing Law 12/2013 of 2 August 2013 was approved, the Observatory was formally constituted at the first meeting of the Plenary held on 7 April 2015. This collegiate body is attached to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food within the Directorate General for the Food Industry, and the secretariat functions correspond to the Sub-Directorate General for the Promotion of Spanish Products. This Observatory creates a framework of knowledge on price formation throughout the agri-food chain by publishing objective data and carrying out studies and reports that allow for the systematic monitoring of food prices. In this way, the aim is to promote transparency and efficiency in the marketing process, thus detecting possible situations of imbalance in the prices of products throughout the marketing chain.

Another important body in the Spanish agri-food system is the National Rural Network (RRN), which is a platform made up of administrations (state, regional and





local), social and economic agents and representatives of civil society and research organisations linked to the rural environment. Its main objective is to promote rural development. To this end, the RRN facilitates the participation of these actors in rural development policies, disseminates the opportunities from which they can benefit and informs and raises awareness among the general public about the importance of the rural environment. Thus, the RRN aims to be a platform for meeting, communication and dissemination for and about the rural environment.

To achieve this, it promotes the creation of working groups on issues relevant to the rural environment. In this sense, there are six thematic lines that cut across all the RRN's work: depopulation, the environment and climate change, dynamisation and entrepreneurship, youth and generational change, innovation and women in rural areas. The RRN organises conferences, workshops and forums on these issues.

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Specifically, the RRN also supports Local Action Groups, public-private groupings created around a territory, to revitalise its social and economic fabric, and involve the local population. In addition, the RRN disseminates innovative projects in the rural environment, organises conferences to publicise current calls for proposals, offers training in matters related to rural development, promotes innovation in this sector, etc.

Its dissemination and knowledge work also includes the quarterly publication of the magazine *Desarrollo Rural y Sostenible* (Rural and Sustainable Development), the dissemination of a monthly news bulletin and the preparation of other studies and analyses on subjects that concern the RRN.

In order to encourage the active participation of the actors involved in the different actions, the RRN meets periodically both in an assembly - made up of all RRN members - and in an executive committee - limited to representatives of the members. The RRN management unit, which reports to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, is responsible for the overall coordination and management of the different proposals.

Likewise, a team of 9 people, called "Regional Antennae", works in situ in the Autonomous Communities to find out about their different needs, and ensure that the RRN is more present in the territory. To know in detail the objectives and activities of the Regional Antennae programme, together with the contact details of each one of them, you can access through the following interactive brochure, available through the web link:

The RRN is funded by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. Regulation 1305/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council on support for rural development by the EAFRD stipulates that each EU Member State must have a national rural network. The European Network for Rural Development (ENRD) is the meeting point for the different national rural networks of the European Union, including the Spanish one. This platform for the exchange of information and experiences seeks to enable Member States to share how their Rural Development Programmes (RDPs) work in practice.





7.4. Main thematic areas of social dialogue

As in other national systems, the social dialogue in Spain is directed to deal with several different themes. Moreover, themes change in time and space due to the changes of the socio-economic situation among the years, and between the Spanish regions. Economic cycles and contingencies also mutate the “rank” in which a certain matter is considered. However, there are some themes that, in the Spanish context, remain quite constant. Unemployment, for instance, has been a constant theme of the Spanish social dialogue since Spain, even though with alternating tendencies, and with differences at regional level, constantly experienced quite high levels. Wages is another theme that accompanied the Spanish social dialogue after the end of the Francoist autocratic regime, and it is still one of the major themes regarding social dialogue.

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Particularly after the economic crisis that hit Spain in 2008, and the employment legal reforms that took place after it, another theme that surged as extremely important in the context of the Spanish social dialogue was the increased precariousness of job contracts.

Lastly, more recently, health and safety in the workplace and, moreover, sustainable development become central in the discussion about the job market and the productive system.





8. E.A.T.S. Survey

8.1. Introduction

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The aim of this paragraph is to provide the key results collected during Task 2.2 “Collection of survey data”. The survey was directed at social partners in the agricultural and food industry of the countries involved in the project: Italy, Greece, North Macedonia, Spain, France and Bulgaria. The survey, conducted by Fondazione ADAPT with the support of CNR and Fondazione FAI-CISL, was administered through the online tool “Google Forms” between January and February 2023²⁸.

The Project Coordinator (FAI-CISL) brought together responses from Italian participants (including other project partners’ members), while other national project partners (BEN) based in France, Spain, Greece, North Macedonia and Bulgaria disseminated the survey among their respective members. National project partners were also supported in the dissemination of the survey by EFFAT (European Federation of Food, Agriculture and Tourism Trade Unions).

The survey was anonymous, and the data obtained and investigated in the following paragraphs was processed in an aggregated way. In order to ensure compliance with European data protection law (Reg. 679/2016), a privacy statement was drafted and included in the final part of the survey, in order to seek respondents’ explicit consent to the processing of their personal data.

8.2 Objectives and structure of the survey

The survey gathered qualitative information with regard to industrial relations systems, collective bargaining structures and social dialogue practices of the countries prior to the project, to integrate the information acquired through the desk research carried out for the E.A.T.S. project and described in Section 1 of the present report.

The survey was structured in sections, as follows: Section #1 – General information; Section #2 – Main features of social dialogue (in the agriculture and food industry; Section #3 – Final remarks.

8.3 Participants’ master data

The survey was completed by 71 respondents. The majority of them are affiliated with an Italian Institution (59.7% of total respondents – 43). A much lower response rate was recorded in Bulgaria (19.4% of total respondents – 14), Greece (6.9% of respondents – 5), Spain (5.6% of respondents - 4), North Macedonia (4.2% - 3) and

²⁸ Fond. ADAPT provided support to respondents with regard to the completion of questionnaires by phone. 3 questionnaires were therefore filled out manually by researchers from Fond. ADAPT following the answers given by the respondents by phone.





France (2.8% - 2). One of the responses was attributable to a country other than the target countries of the project (Romania).

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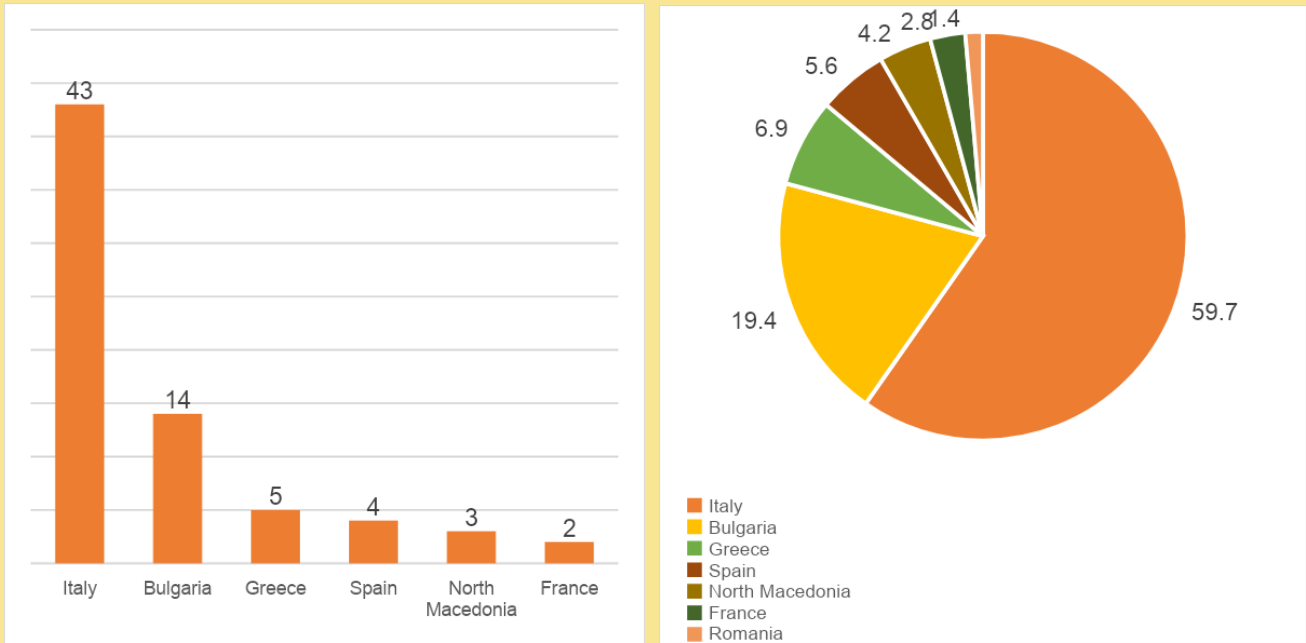


Fig. 1. Respondents by country – Absolute and percentage values

With respect to the variable of respondents' affiliation (trade union/employers' organisation), a balance between the two macro-types of respondents was registered. In detail, the majority of respondents (54.2% - 39) were trade union members, while members of an employers' organisation made up 45.8% of respondents (33).

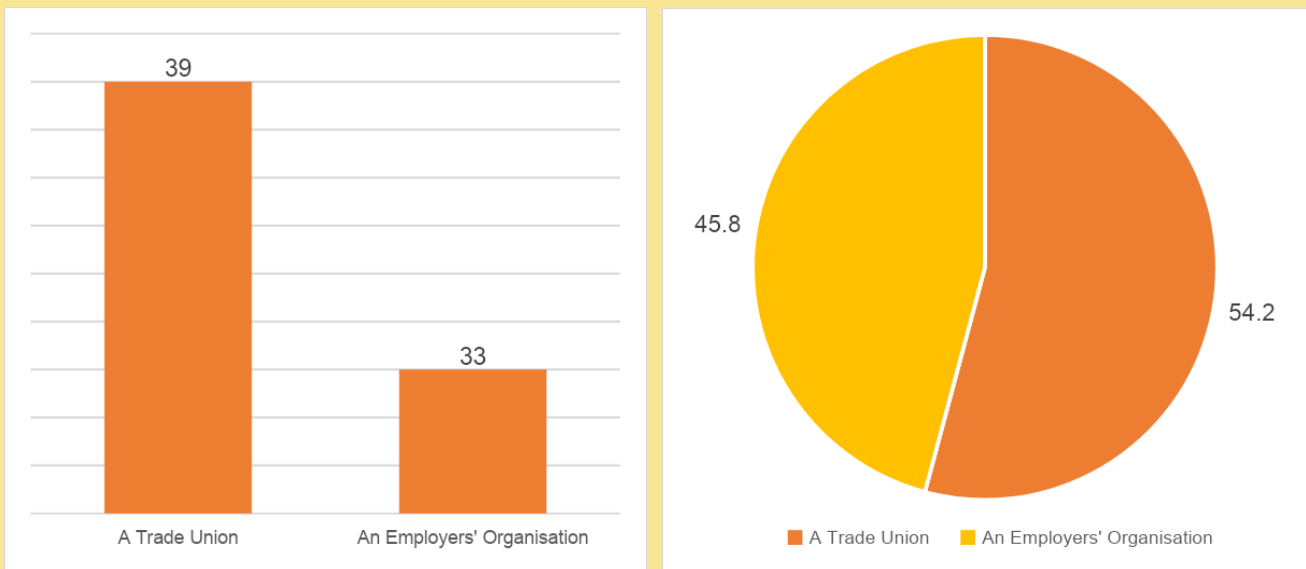


Fig. 2. Respondents per organisation type – Absolute and percentage values





Given the peculiarities of some of the partners' organisations, representing not only workers/employers of the agricultural sector or of the food industry, but both (e.g., FAI-CISL), respondents were asked whether the organisation they are a member of represented the food industry, the agricultural sector or both. More than half of respondents stated that their organisation represented workers/employers of the agricultural AND food industry sector (51.4% - 37); 38.9% (23) were active only in the agricultural sector, and only 9.4% (7) were active only in the food industry sector.

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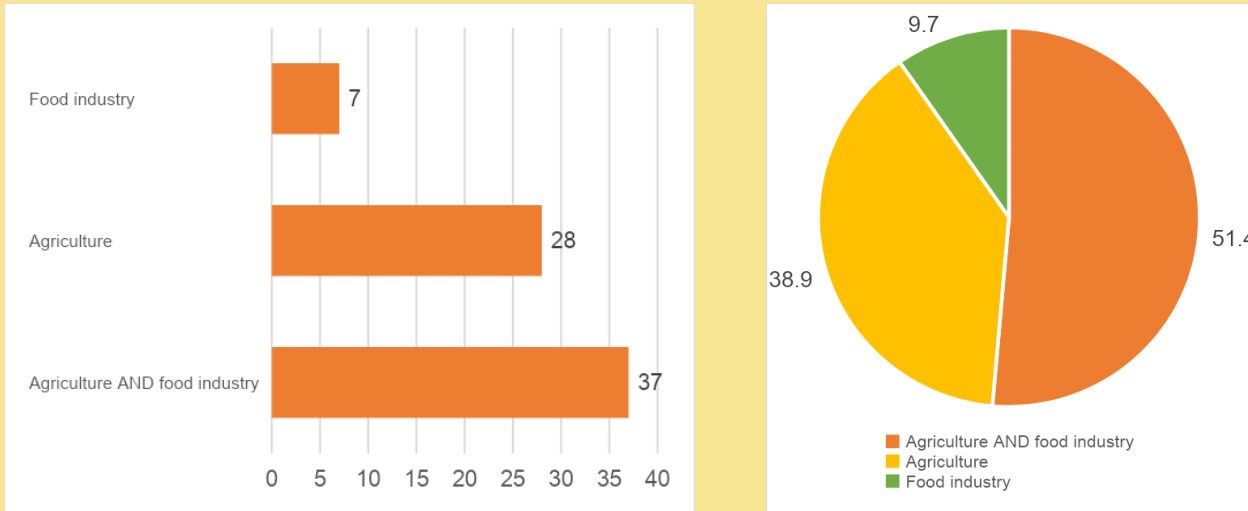


Fig. 3. Respondents per sectorial activity – Absolute and percentage values

Lastly, respondents were asked to identify their operational level (national, territorial, company level). More than half of the respondents selected the option “territorial level” (51.4% - 37); more than a third (37.5% - 27) stated they operated nationally. Company-level trade union/employers’ association members constituted instead a minority (11.1% - 8).

Looking at the respondents’ operational level by country, it can be observed how, for example, the majority of Italian respondents (33) stated to be active at territorial level, while only 8 respondents selected the option “national level”, and 2 affirmed to operate at company level. With regard to Bulgaria, instead, half of the respondents were active at national level (7), 4 at territorial level and 3 at company level. Finally, Greek respondents were distributed among the national level (3) and the company level (2).



Among territorial-level respondents, the majority of them (37.8% - 14) affirmed to operate on a regional level, while the rest operated on smaller portions of territory (Departmental; Provincial; Local municipalities).

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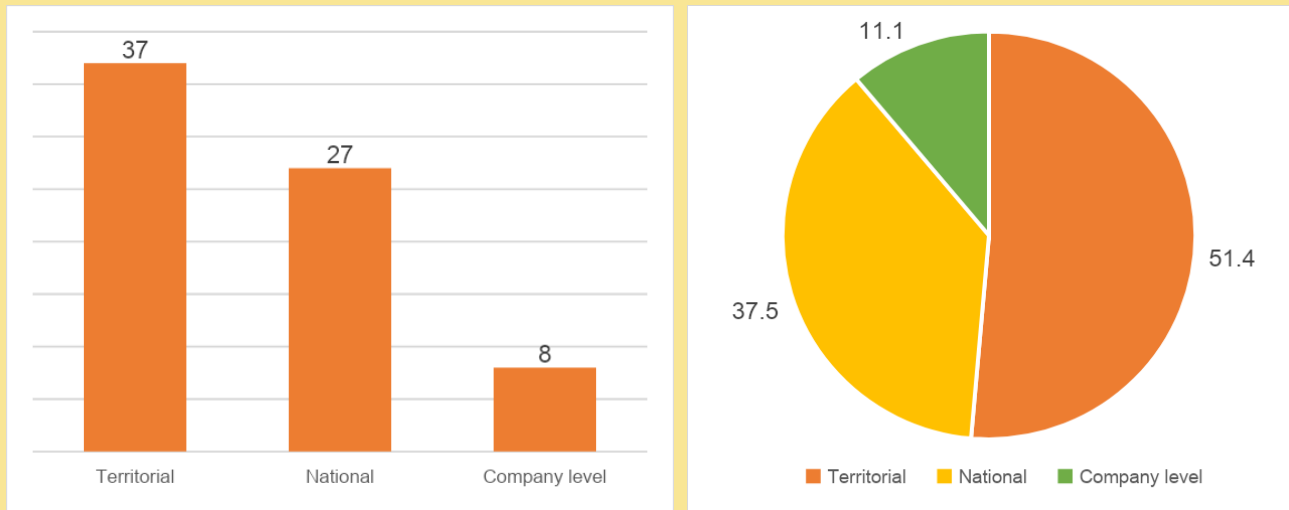


Fig. 4. Respondents per operational territorial level – Absolute and percentage values

8.4 Perceived relevance of social dialogue

8.4.1 In agriculture

In order to contextualise social dialogue in the selected countries' agricultural sector, respondents were asked how relevant they perceived social dialogue to be in their country, by selecting a value from one to seven.

43% of respondents (28) affirmed that social dialogue in agriculture was “very relevant” in their country; generally, a low relevance of social dialogue (values 2, 3) in agriculture was perceived by only a minority of respondents. No respondent argued that social dialogue was “not relevant at all”.

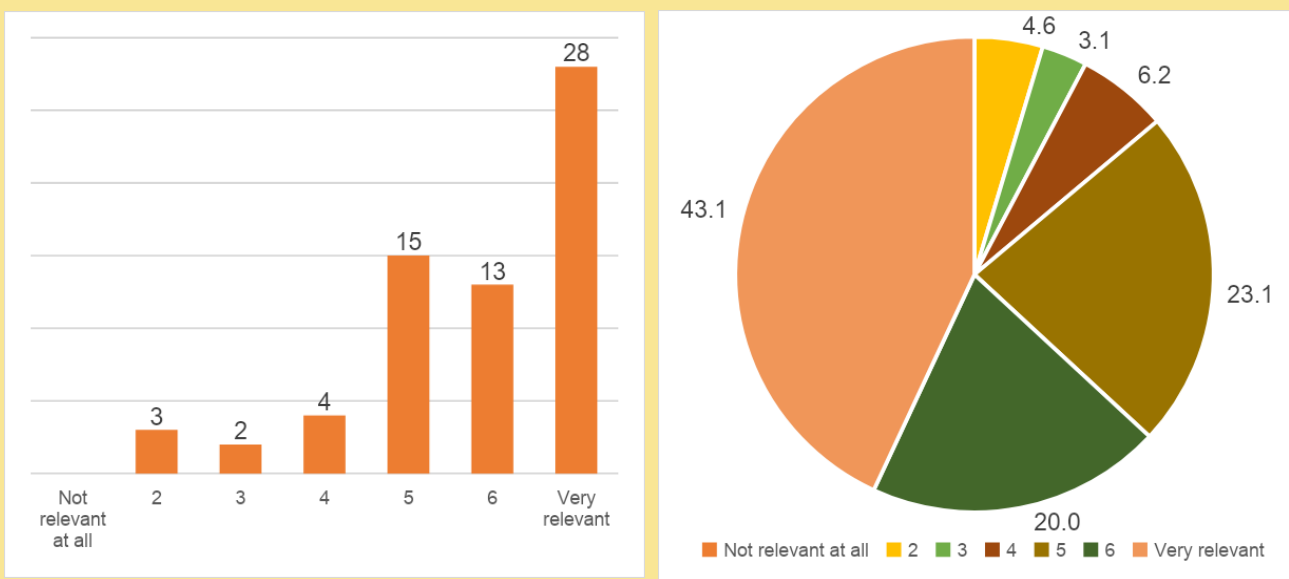


Fig. 5. Answers to the question: “In your opinion, how relevant is social dialogue in your country’s agricultural sector?” – Absolute and percentage values

A higher percentage of employers’ association members (53.3%) perceived social dialogue to be “very relevant” (value 7) compared to trade union members (34.3%).

The average value attributed to the importance of social dialogue in agriculture was higher among employers’ associations (5.97) than trade unions (5.66).

With regard to the geographical distribution of respondents, respondents coming from Southern Europe generally perceived social dialogue in agriculture to be more relevant compared to those coming from Eastern Europe.

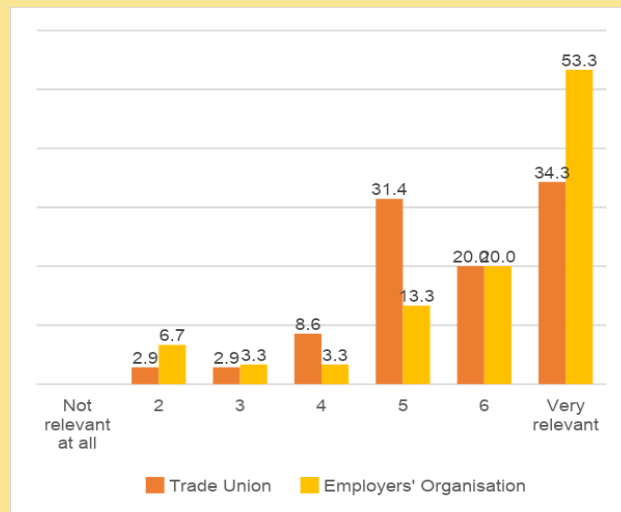
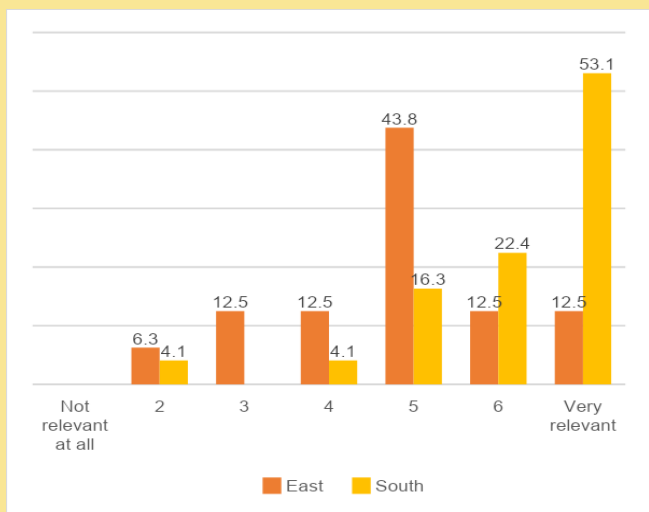


Fig. 6. Answers to the question: “In your opinion, how relevant is social dialogue in your country’s agricultural sector?” per European macro-region – Percentage values

Fig. 7. Answers to the question: “In your opinion, how relevant is social dialogue in your country’s agricultural sector?” per type of organisation – Percentage values

8.4.2 In the food industry

The same questions were also submitted to respondents from the food industry sector/branch, and the answers were fairly similar to those of the respondents in the agricultural sector: 84.1% of respondents (37) perceived social dialogue to be relevant. In this case, one respondent affirmed that social dialogue was not relevant at all in their country’s food industry.

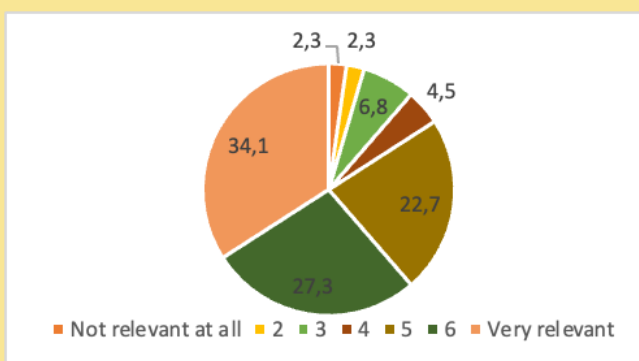
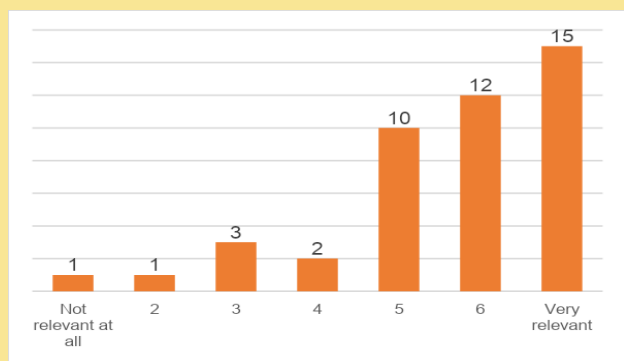


Fig. 8. Answers to the question: “In your opinion, how relevant is social dialogue in your country’s agricultural sector?” – Absolute and percentage values





As opposed to the scenario resulting from answers relating to the agricultural sector, a higher percentage of trade union members (53.3%) perceived social dialogue to be “very relevant” (value 7) compared to members of employers’ associations of the food industry sector (34.3%). However, a higher percentage of employers’ associations members selected values 5-6 on the question, thus indicating the perceived relevance of social dialogue in their sector.

In this case, the geographical distribution of respondents showed a marked difference among respondents coming from southern Europe and respondents coming from Eastern Europe: no respondent from Southern Europe selected a value under 5 when asked about the relevance of social dialogue in their country’s food industry, while Eastern Europeans indicated a lower relevance in this sense.

The average value attributed to the importance of social dialogue in the food sector was higher among trade unions (5.69) than employers’ associations (5.42)

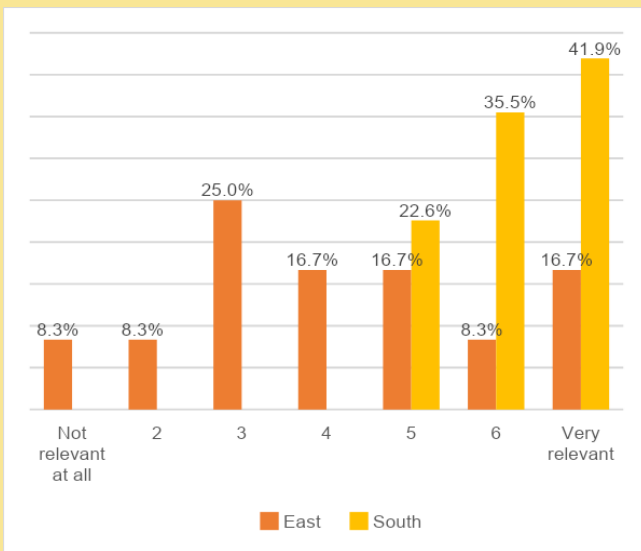


Fig. 9. Answers to the question: “In your opinion, how relevant is social dialogue in your country’s food industry sector?” per European macro-region – Percentage values

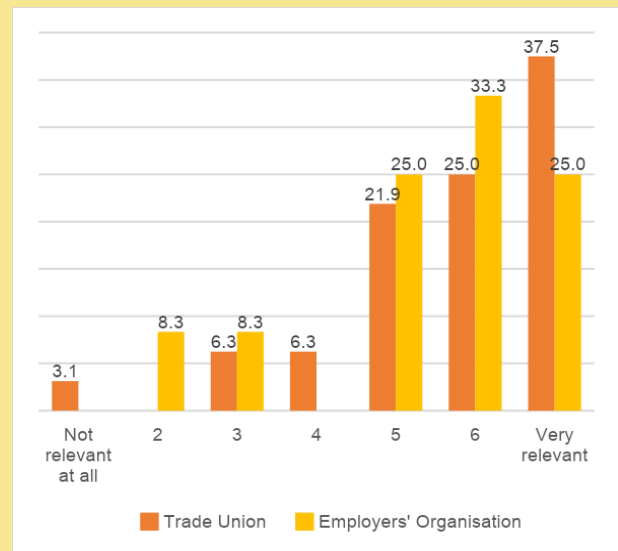


Fig. 10. Answers to the question: “In your opinion, how relevant is social dialogue in your country’s food industry sector?” per type of organisation – Percentage values

8.5. More frequently discussed topics by social dialogue

8.5.1. In agriculture

In order to further analyse the activities of social partners in the agricultural sector, respondents were asked to indicate which topics were more frequently discussed in the context of social dialogue.

The most selected topic was wage setting (46.2%), followed by types of contractual arrangements (43.1%), migrant work (41.5%) and environmental sustainability (40%).



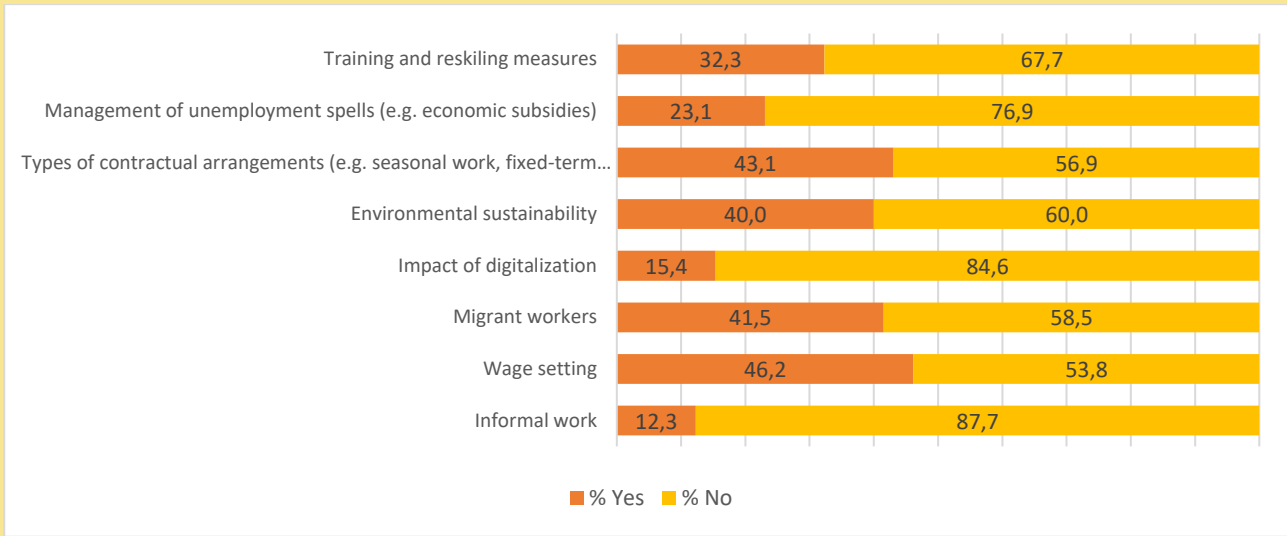


Fig. 11. Answers to the question: “Which are the most frequent topics discussed among social partners in your country’s agricultural sector?” – Percentage values

Among them, wage setting was indicated as a topic of discussion mostly by respondents coming from Eastern Europe (26.8%), while a much lower percentage of Eastern European respondents (2.4%) indicated migrant work as a topic of discussion in social dialogue, compared with respondents from Southern Europe (21%). The topics of types of contractual arrangements and environmental sustainability were instead selected by a more even number of respondents.

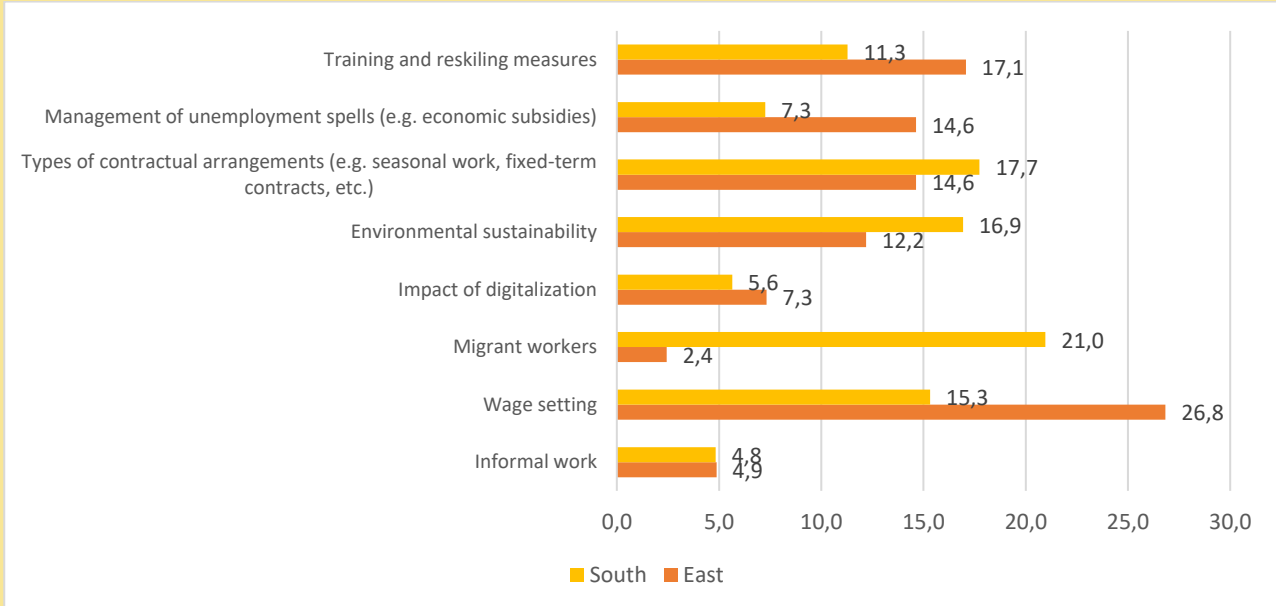


Fig. 12. Answers to the question: “Which are the most frequent topics discussed among social partners in your country’s agricultural sector?” per European macro-region – Percentage values





8.5.2 In the food industry

The same question was asked to respondents in the food industry: in this case, the most frequently selected topics were wage setting (50% of respondents) and types of contractual arrangements (47.7%), followed by migrant work (38.6%).

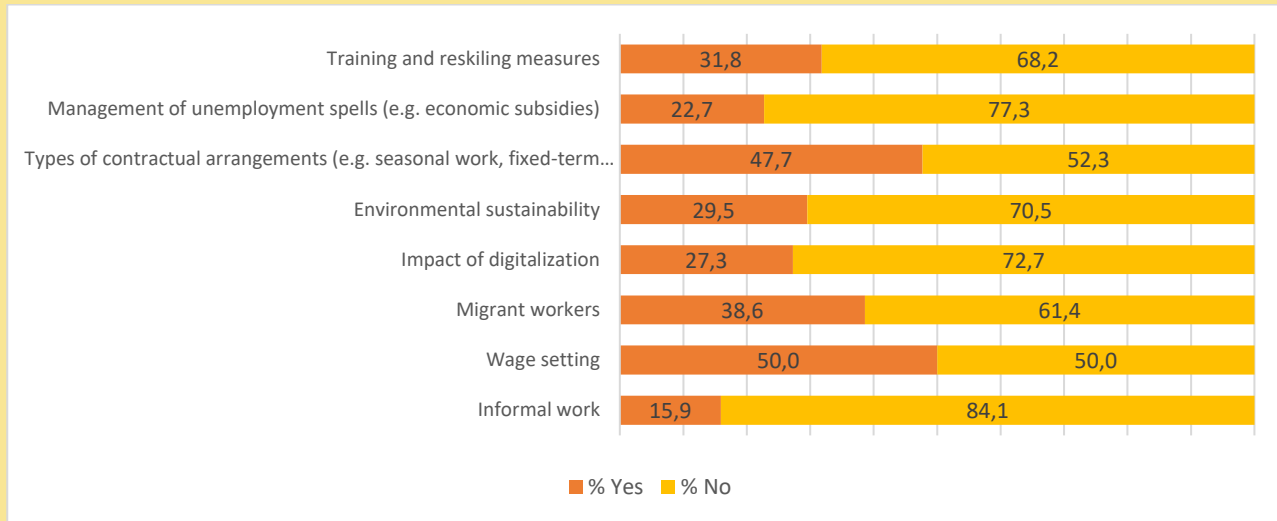


Fig. 13. Answers to the question: "Which are the most frequent topics discussed among social partners in your country's food industry sector?" – Percentage values

Like the agricultural sector, wage setting in the food industry was indicated as a social dialogue topic of discussion mostly by respondents coming from Eastern Europe (23.5%). Instead, no Eastern European respondents indicated migrant work as a topic of discussion in social dialogue, a figure which stands out when comparing the answers from Southern European respondents. Interestingly, training and reskilling measures were identified as a central topic by several Eastern European respondents (20.6%) but only a few Southern European ones (8.5%).



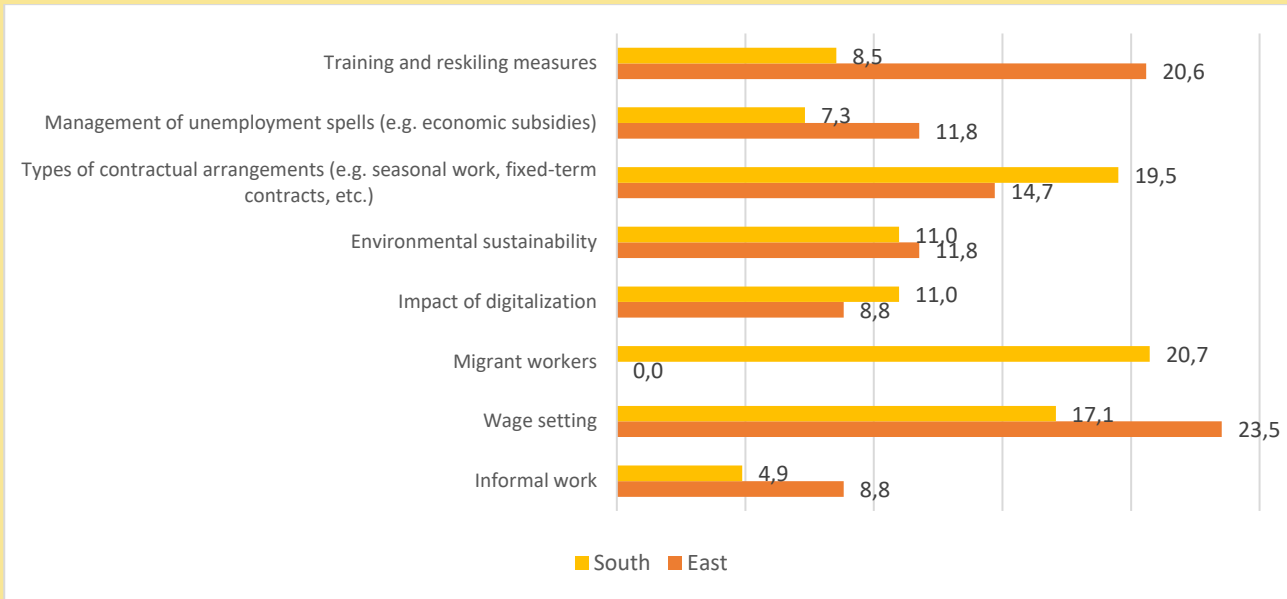


Fig. 14. Answers to the question: “Which are the most frequent topics discussed among social partners in your country’s food industry sector?” per European macro-region – Percentage values

8.6. Level of social dialogue

8.6.1. In agriculture

After the overview of the topics most frequently discussed by the social partners, the research aimed to investigate at which levels social dialogue practices in the agricultural sector are mainly carried out. In most cases, these practices take place at the national level (53.8%), although the territorial level also seems to cover a significant role, considering all the respondents who indicated the regional, provincial and departmental level as the main forum for social dialogue in the sector (40%). On the other hand, the role of company-level social dialogue appears less important (3.1%).

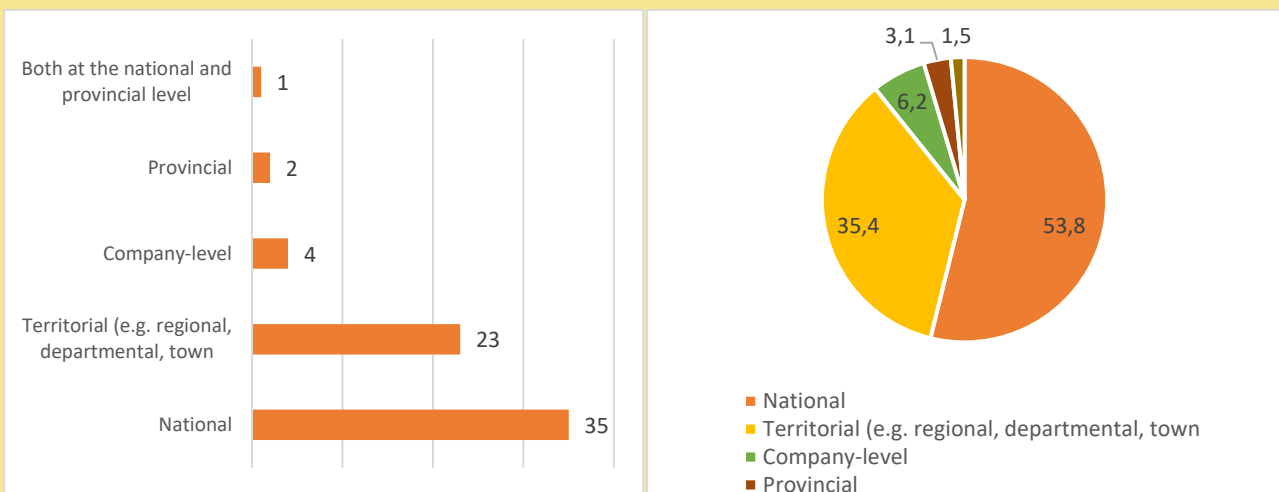


Fig. 15. Answers to the question: “Which is the main level on which social partners operate in your country’s agricultural sector?” – Absolute and percentage values





8.6.2. In the food industry

Moving on to the food sector, the general scenario partially changes as, beyond the prevalence of the national level in the majority of cases (56.8%), a particularly important role is played by the company level, which is the main centre of social dialogue activities in 13.6% of cases, considering the higher number of large companies. The territorial level also retains a certain importance (27.3%), with a particular emphasis on regional practices (58.3% of all the territorial practices). Finally, it should be noted that 1 of the respondents selected the "European" level as the main location for social dialogue practices.

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8.7. Ways of developing social dialogue

8.7.1. In agriculture

Turning to the ways in which social dialogue is developed, respondents were probed to identify the main practices promoted by social partners, either autonomously or in tandem with national institutions active in their sector. With reference to the agricultural sector, it can be seen that collective bargaining is the key instrument of social dialogue in more than half of the cases (56.9%), followed by another autonomous practice of social dialogue, represented by the procedures of information and consultation of workers by companies (46.2%). Tripartite practices with public institutions, particularly at national level, also play a major role (40.0%), while co-determination practices, which imply greater direct involvement of the parties in company decisions, still play a residual role (7.7%).

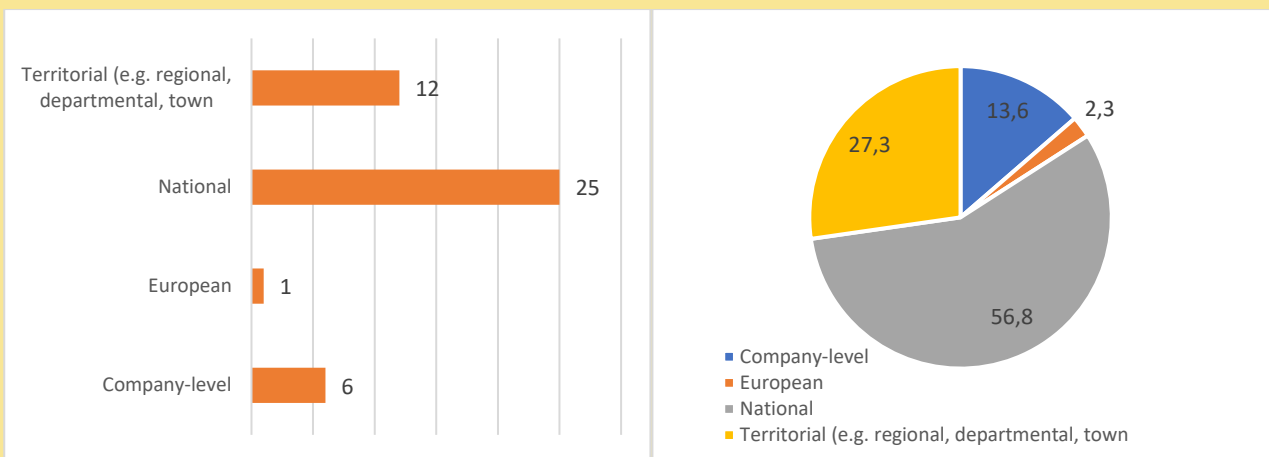


Fig.16. Answers to the question: "Which is the main level on which social partners operate in your country's food sector?" – Absolute and percentage values



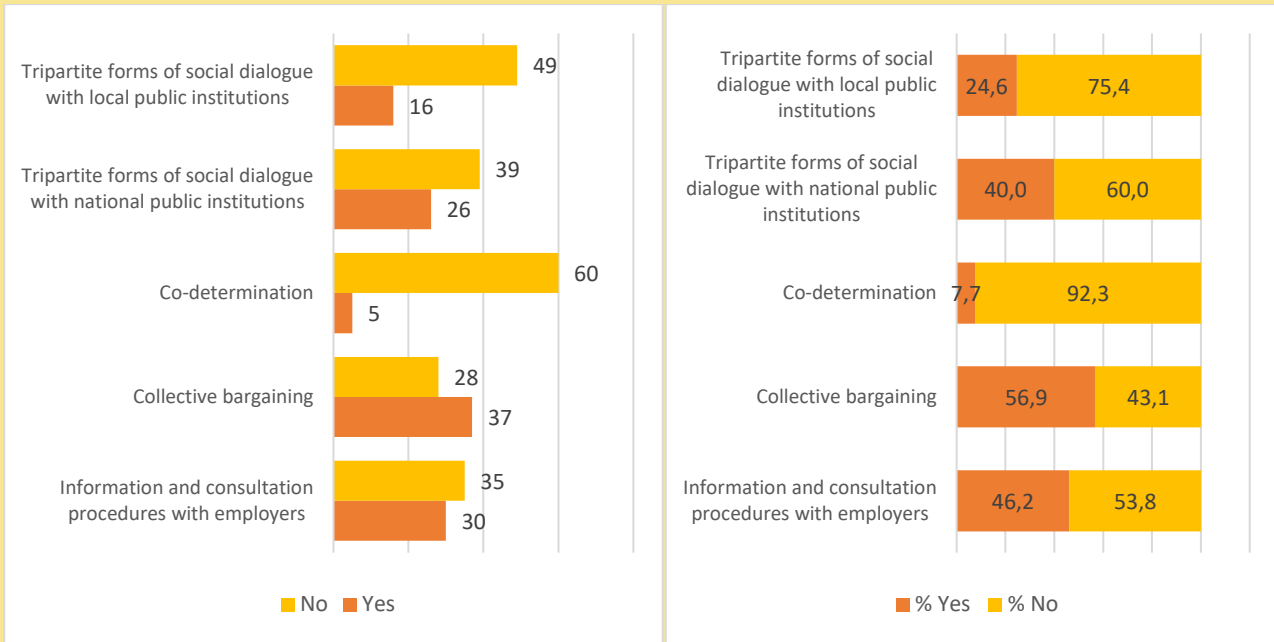


Fig. 17. Answers to the question: "In your experience, social dialogue in your country's agricultural sector is mainly developed through: (up to two options can be selected)" – Absolute and percentage values

8.7.2 In the food industry

The trends in the food sector mostly follow those in the agricultural sector, with a predominant role of collective bargaining and information and consultation procedures (65.9% and 45.5% of responses respectively). However, while co-determination practices are more widespread (20.5%), the role of tripartite social dialogue, especially at the national level, appears less relevant.



8.8. The European social dialogue: perceived relevance and means of influence

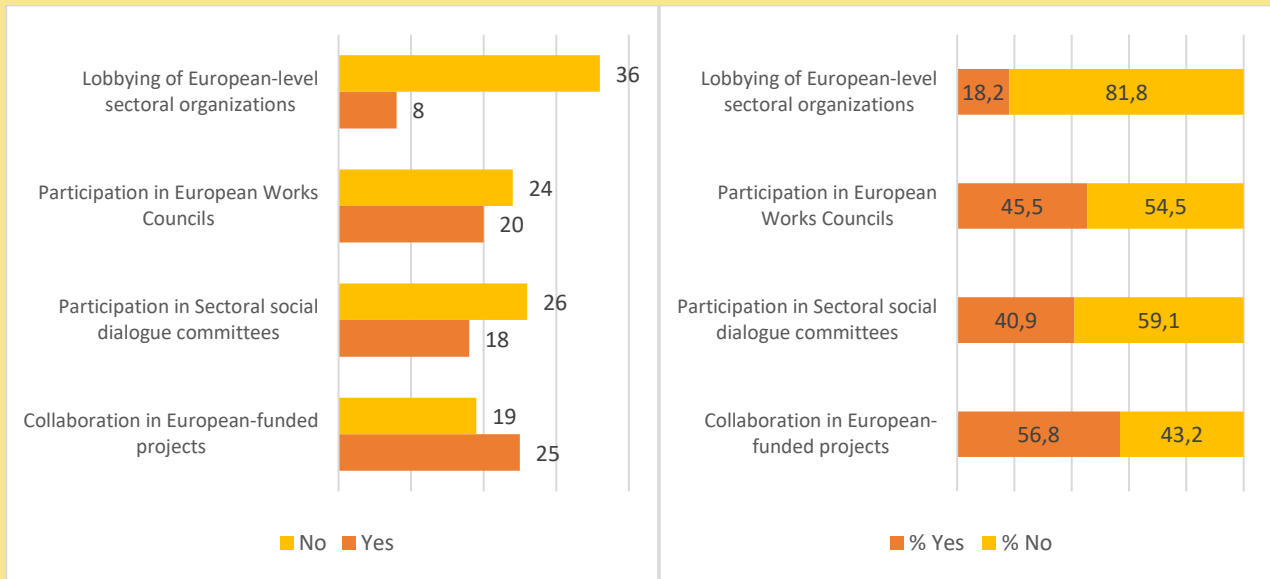


Fig. 18. Answers to the question: “In your experience, social dialogue in your country’s food sector is mainly developed through: (up to two options can be selected)” – Absolute and percentage values

8.8.1 In agriculture

In conclusion, respondents were asked about the role and influence of the European social dialogue practices in the agricultural sector, by selecting a value from one (not relevant at all) to seven (very relevant).

27,7% of respondents affirmed that the European social dialogue in agriculture was “very relevant” in their country. In general, there is a high relevance of these practices in the different national contexts, as the majority of respondents (a total of 83.1%) answered with values of 4 or higher. No respondent affirmed that social dialogue was “not relevant at all”.

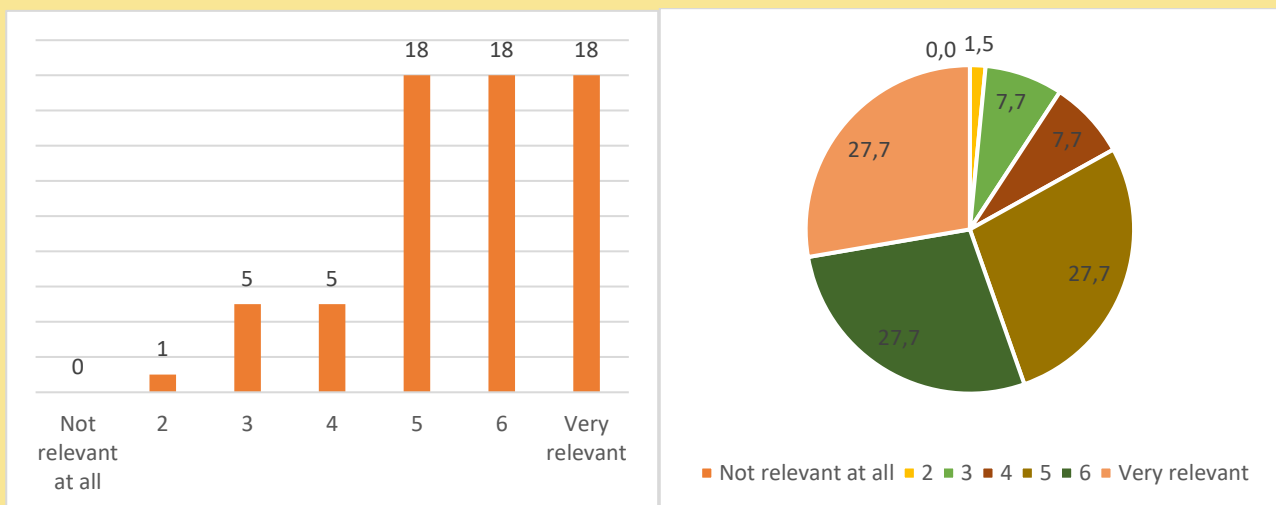


Fig. 19. Answers to the question: “In your opinion, how relevant is European social dialogue in your country’s agricultural sector?” – Absolute and percentage values





Looking in detail at the sample of respondents, it can be seen that the least enthusiastic judgements on European social dialogue practices come from members of employers' associations. Overall, 13.3% of members of employers' associations answered with a value of 3 or less, compared to 5.7% of trade union representatives.

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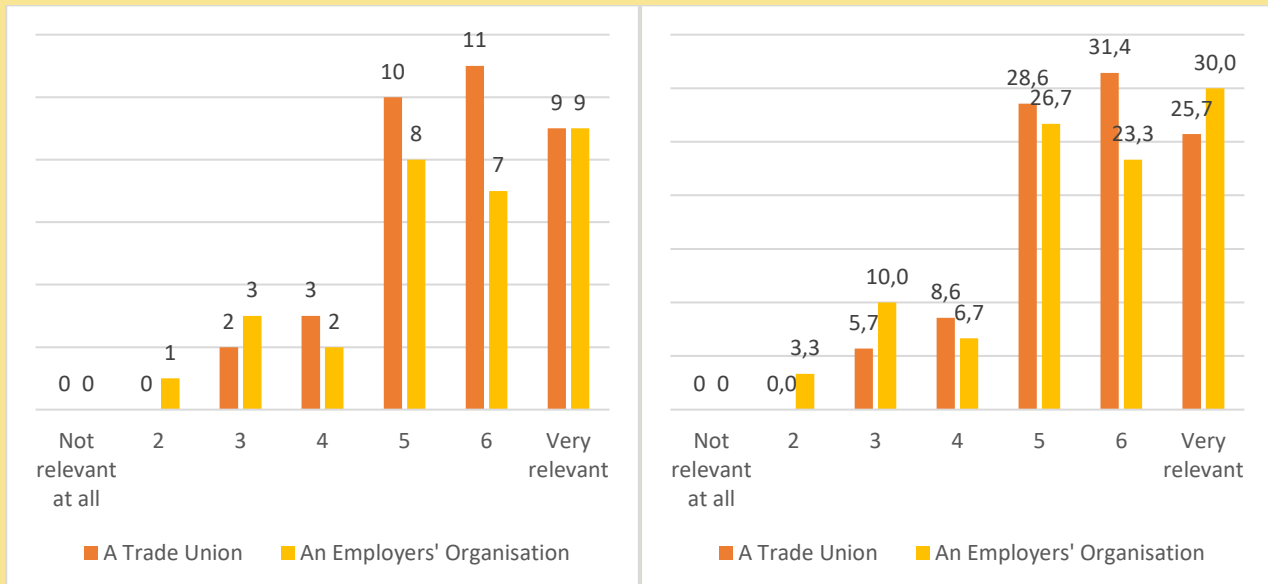


Fig. 20. Answers to the question: "In your opinion, how relevant is European social dialogue in your country's agricultural sector?" per type of organisation– Absolute and percentage values

The real difference in the perception of the relevance of the European social dialogue, however, can be seen by comparing the responses of respondents from Southern countries with those from Eastern countries. While the vast majority of the former share positive or very positive views of the relevance of the European social dialogue in their national context (91.9% of these respondents chose values between 5 and 7), the situation is more diverse for the Eastern countries, with 18.8% of respondents answering "3" and 1 respondent (6.3%) answering "2".



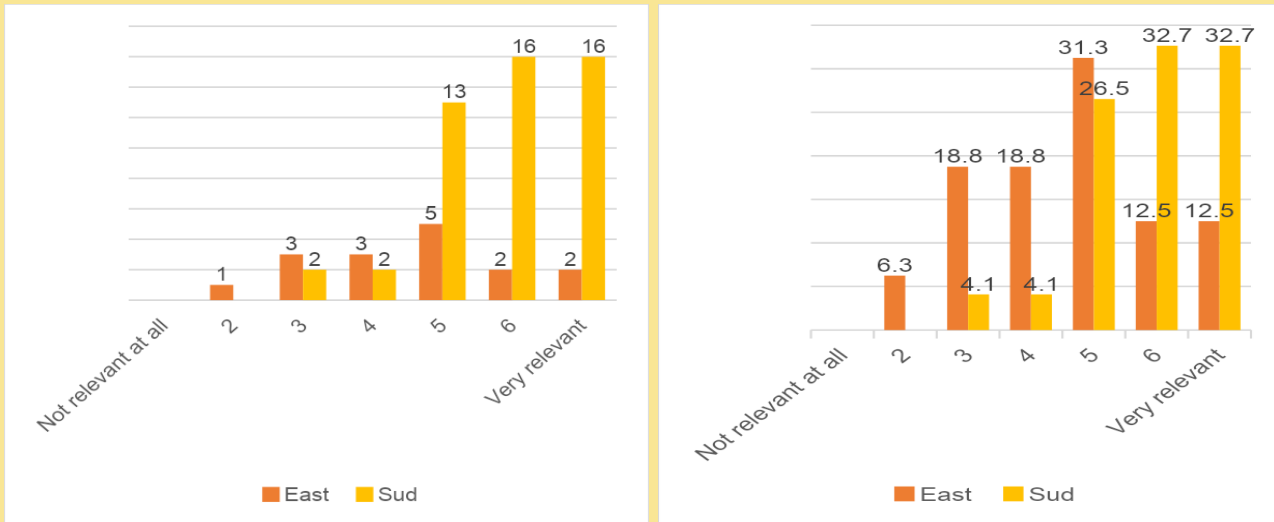


Fig. 21. Answers to the question: "In your opinion, how relevant is European social dialogue in your country's agricultural sector?" per region – Absolute and percentage values

Finally, the respondents were asked to identify what European social dialogue practices are most influential in their sector. In this regard, the predominant role of EU-funded projects can be observed, with 72% of respondents selecting collaboration in European projects as their main option. This is followed, with considerably lower percentages, by the participation in sector committees (44.6%), the participation in European works councils (26.2%), and the lobbying activities of European sector trade unions and employers' organisations (21.5%).

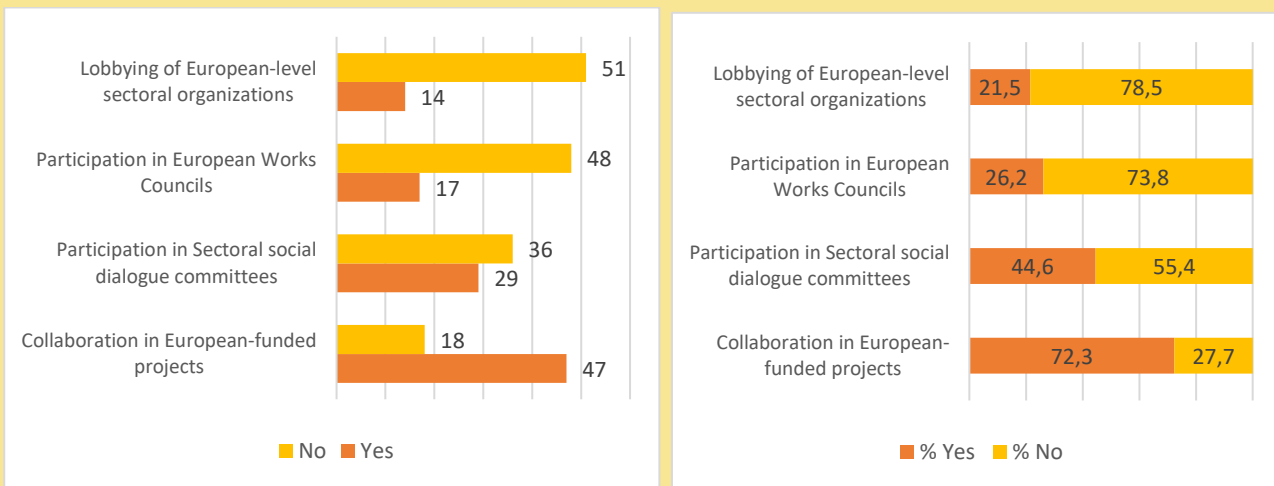


Fig. 22. Answers to the question: "Through which instruments does European social dialogue influence and steer social dialogue in your country's agricultural sector?" – Absolute and percentage values

Looking at the target/sample of respondents, the positive assessment of European projects is shared by trade union and employer members, while the participation in European sectoral committees and European works councils is generally perceived as more influential by trade union members. However, significant differences are noted in the responses regarding lobbying activities. European lobbying plays a





leading role in national social dialogue for 22.7% of respondents belonging to employer associations, and only 6.3% for trade union representatives.

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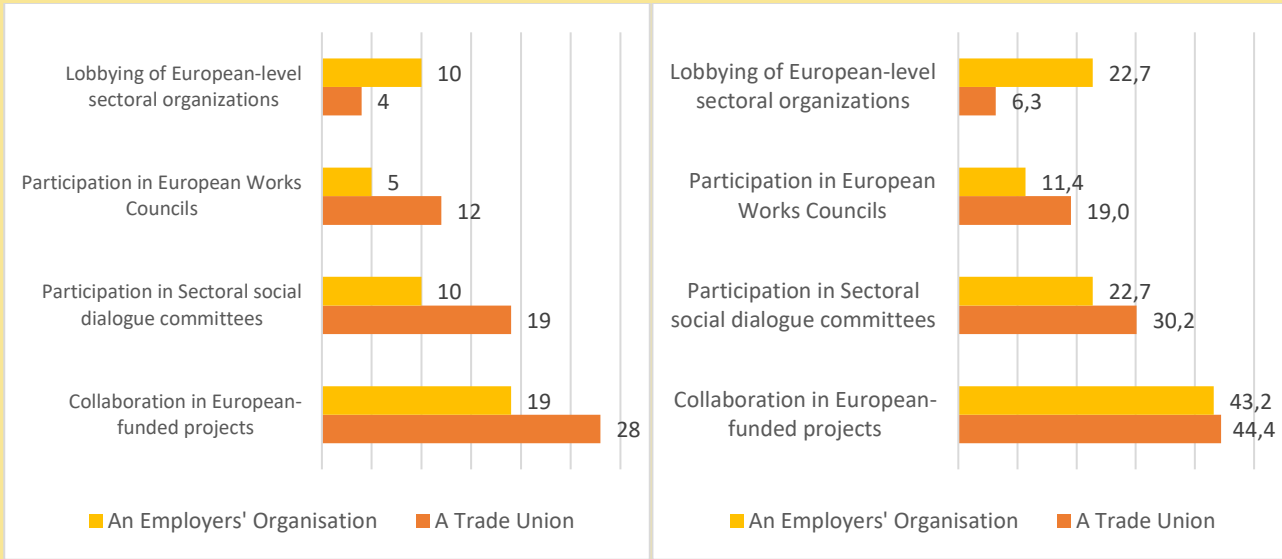


Fig. 23. Answers to the question: "Through which instruments does European social dialogue influence and steer social dialogue in your country's agricultural sector" per type of organisation– Absolute and percentage values

8.8.2 In the food industry

Shifting the focus to the food sector, the values found appear to be trending downwards, compared to the answers given in the agricultural sector. A wider range of respondents (13.8%), answered with values ranging from 1 to 3, with one respondent answering 'not relevant at all'.

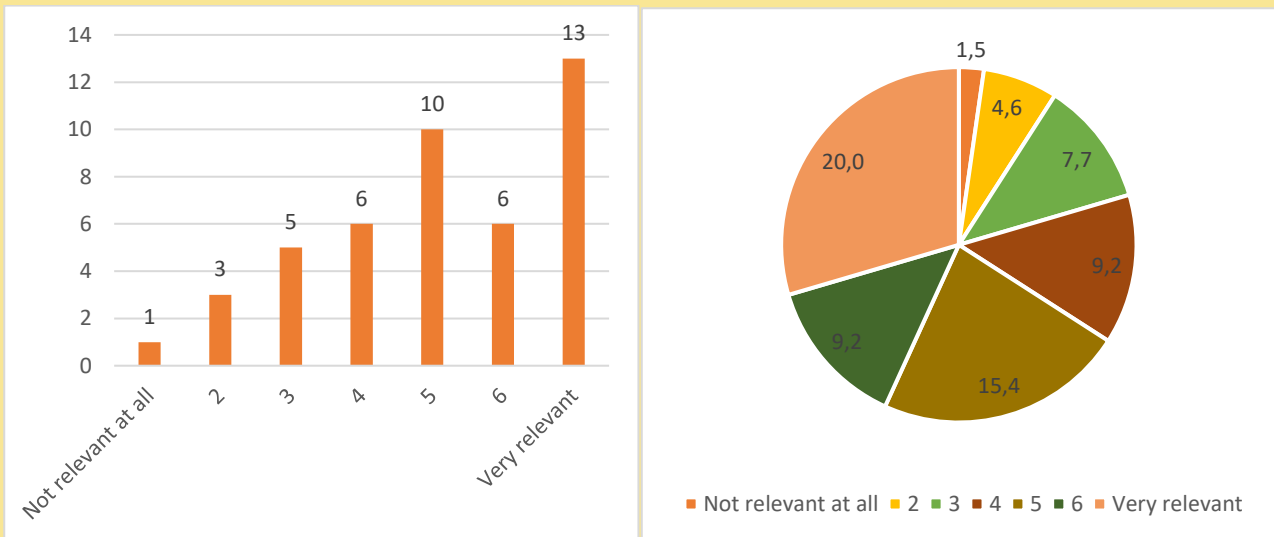


Fig. 24. Answers to the question: "In your opinion, how relevant is European social dialogue in your country's food sector?" – Absolute and percentage values





Negative responses are driven, in particular, by the representatives of employers' associations, who appear more sceptical, in general, about the role of the European social dialogue in the sector.

Looking at the geographical breakdown of responses, respondents from southern countries generally perceive the role of the European social dialogue to be more relevant. 35.5% of respondents from southern European countries consider the social dialogue to be "very relevant", compared with 15.4% of respondents from eastern Europe who also report a wider range of neutral or negative responses.

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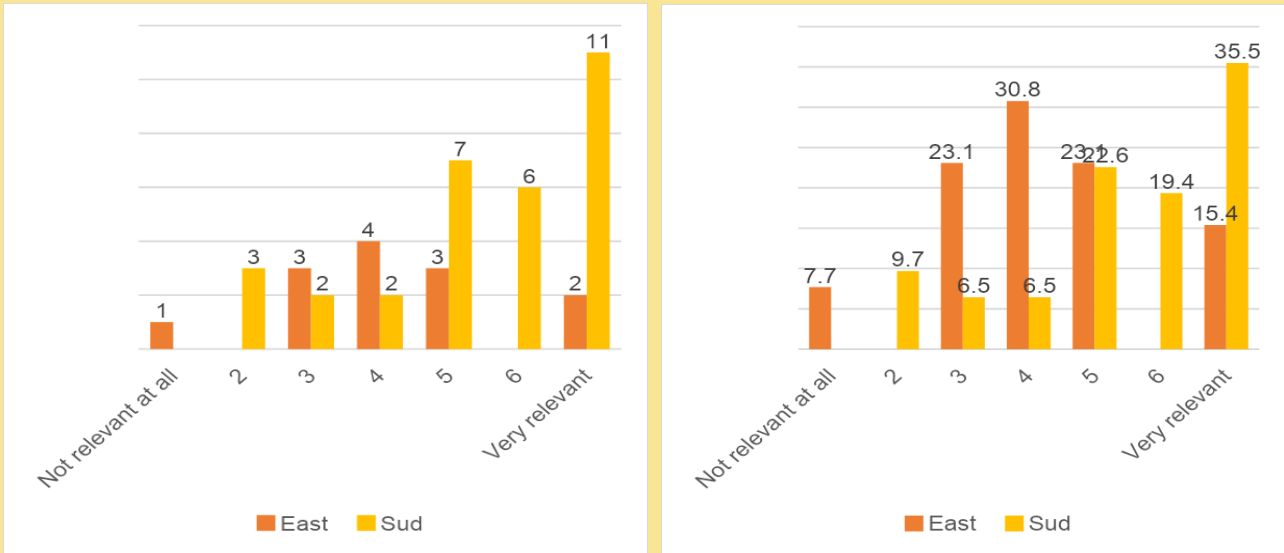


Fig. 25. Answers to the question: "In your opinion, how relevant is European social dialogue in your country's food sector?" per region – Absolute and percentage values

Regarding the instruments through which the European social dialogue influences national practices, the most relevant activity is the participation in European projects, albeit at a lower rate than in the agricultural sector (56.8%). Moreover, the influence of European works councils grows considerably (45.5%) compared to the agricultural sector. In this regard, the greater presence of large companies, which operate in more than one EU country, is influential. The participation in European sector committees also plays a certain role (40.9%), while a marginal role is played by the lobbying activities of European organisations (18.2%).



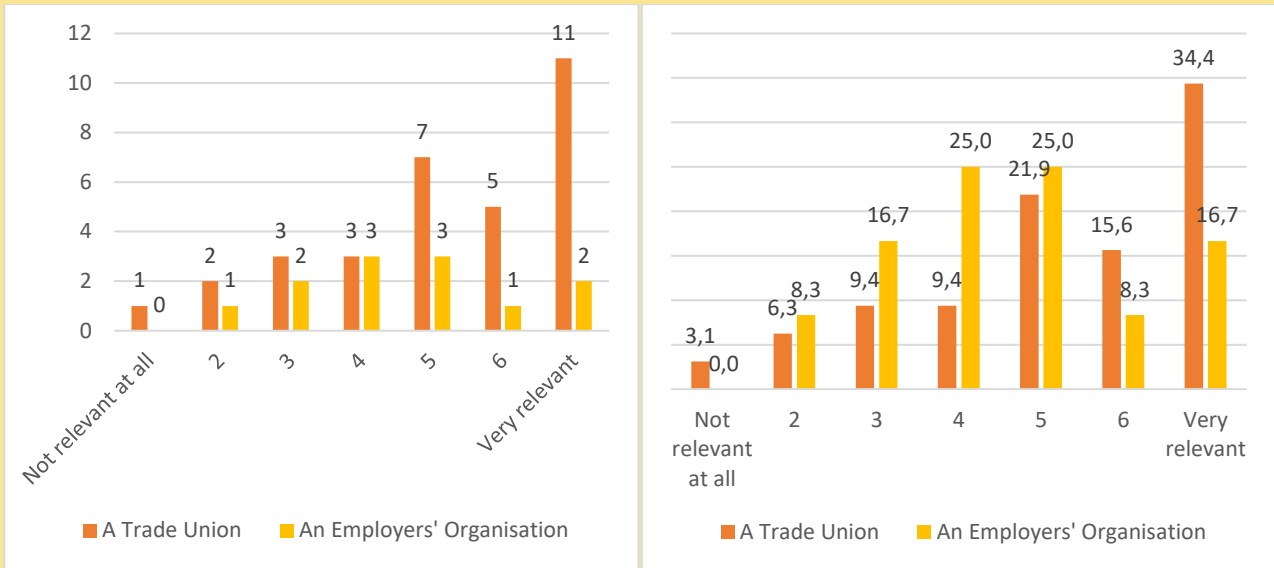


Fig. 26. Answers to the question: "In your opinion, how relevant is European social dialogue in your country's food sector?" per type of organisation– Absolute and percentage values

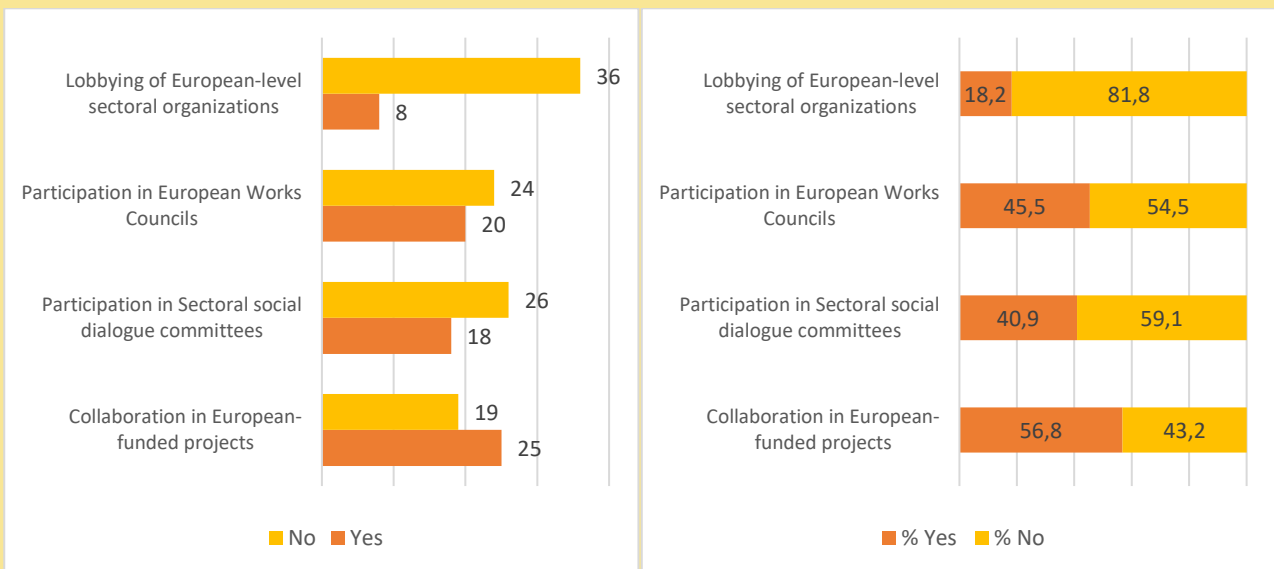


Fig. 27. Answers to the question: "Through which instruments does European social dialogue influence and steer social dialogue in your country's food sector?" – Absolute and percentage values

Finally, looking at the characteristics of the respondents, the most significant differences are observed in relation to the participation in European projects and the lobbying activities. In the first case, the figure is driven by the positive opinion of trade union members (38.9% vs. 23.5% of members of employer associations). With regard to the lobbying activities, on the other hand, as observed in the agricultural sector, these are mainly considered to be important by members of employer associations (29.4% of this sample), while only 5.6% of trade union representatives chose this practice.



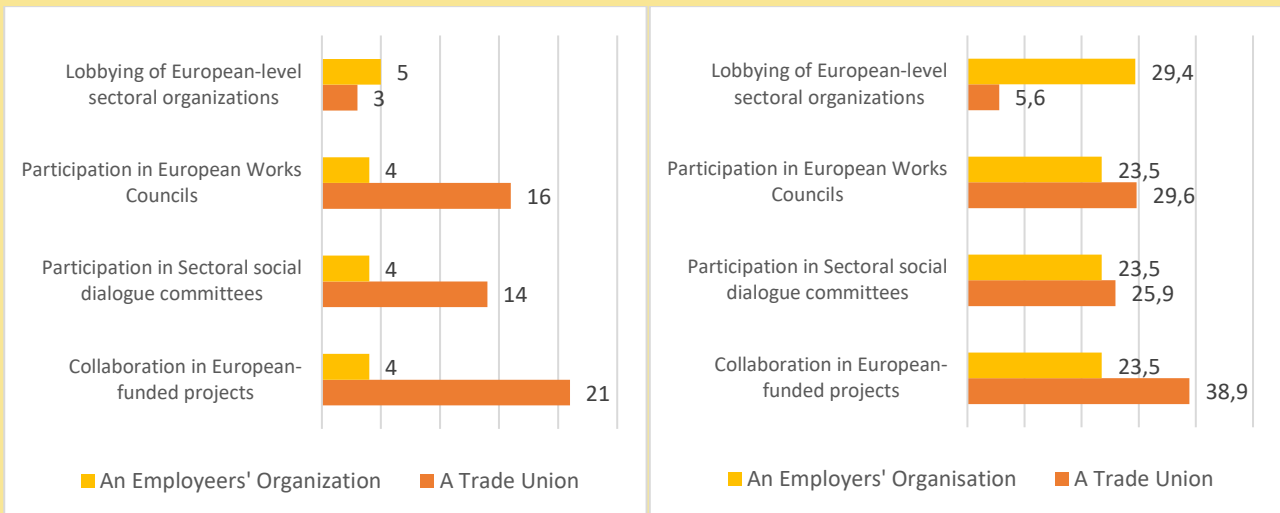


Fig. 28. Answers to the question: “Through which instruments does European social dialogue influence and steer social dialogue in your country's food sector?” per type of organisation– Absolute and percentage values

8.9 General considerations and conclusions

The survey provided more wide-ranging results in some territorial contexts (Italy) than others, given the number of answers received, and therefore will need to be integrated through targeted interviews to social partners active in countries not sufficiently covered by the survey. However, the collected data can still provide adequate support to evidence emerged during the desk research phase.

The results of the survey can be summarised as follows:

- The vast majority of participants perceived social dialogue to be very relevant in their sector of activity. However, participants from Southern Europe generally perceived social dialogue to be more important than their Eastern counterparts both in the agricultural sector and in the food industry sector.
- The most frequently discussed topics by social dialogue in agriculture and the food industry sector are types of contractual arrangements, wage setting and migrant workers, despite the latter not being a very common topic among Eastern European respondents.
- Social dialogue in agriculture and in the food industry sector appears to be mostly carried out at the national level. Territorial-level social dialogue is more widespread in agriculture compared to the food industry sector, while company-level social dialogue plays a marginal role in both sectors.
- The main social dialogue practices carried out by respondents active both in agriculture and in the food industry sector were collective bargaining, information and consultation procedures with employers, and tripartite forms of social dialogue carried out with national public institutions.





- European social dialogue was generally perceived as more relevant by respondents active in both surveyed sectors, who reported how the collaboration in European-funded projects is the most influential instrument in steering national social dialogue initiatives; however, Southern European respondents shared more positive views of the relevance of the European social dialogue in their national context, while the responses coming from Eastern European respondents were more diverse.





Appendix 1

Table A1: Lists and descriptions of relevant projects in the agri-food social dialogue in the countries considered, funded by national and international bodies

EATS Partner Country	Further countries involved	Project Title	Years	Objectives	Founding body	Link to the Project website
Spain	Denmark, France, Germany, Slovenia and UK	Reducing precarious work in Europe through social dialogue	2014-2016	The purpose of the project was to explore to what extent innovative forms of social dialogue in different country contexts can reduce the precariousness of employment and promote more inclusive labour markets	DG Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities	https://documents.manchester.ac.uk/display.aspx?DocID=48965
Spain	EU-27	Enhancing the Effectiveness of Social Dialogue Articulation in Europe (EESDA)	2017-2019	Advanced the knowledge and expertise on the articulation of social dialogue in Europe and its effectiveness. It studied the ways in which social dialogue at different levels functions and the channels through which EU-level social dialogue - across and within sectors - affects the actors, decisions and outcomes at national and sub-national level, and vice versa	Co-founded by the European Union	https://www.sipotra.it/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Stakeholders%E2%80%99-views-on-and-experiences-with-the-articulation-of-social-dialogue-and-its-effectiveness.pdf
Spain	Germany, Romania, United Kingdom and Poland	SODITREC: Social Dialogue in the Transforming Economy	2019-2021	The project aimed at providing a more comprehensive analysis of company-level social dialogue in the European Union. The scientific results of the project will be valid for orientation of EU policy-making and legislation in the field of industrial relations.	European Commission – Directorate General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion	https://soditrec.eu/
Spain	France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Netherlands, Poland and	CODEBAR: Comparisons in decentralised bargaining: towards new	2020-2022	This project addressed, from an interdisciplinary and multi-level governance perspective, the social	DG of Employment, Social Affairs	https://aias-hsi.uva.nl/en/projects-a-z/codebar/codebar.html?cb





	Sweden	relations between trade unions and works councils?		partners' responses to downward pressures on the locus of collective bargaining and the subsequent increasing involvement of workers' representation at the company level. CODEBAR analyses the backgrounds, practices and effects of decentralised bargaining at the company level	and Equal Opportunities	
Bulgaria	None	Improving the adaptability of employees and strengthening collective bargaining through joint actions of the social partners at national and sectoral level	2012-2014	The main goal of the project was to improve the protection of labour, and social security rights of employees and their equal treatment at the workplace through the development and introduction of new practices and tools for adapting enterprises and employees to change. The project's acts encompassed activities, promoting greater cooperation between social partners and the evolution of industrial relations	Human Resources Development Operational Programme	http://ktd.dostoentrud.org/
Bulgaria	Italy, FYROM, Romania and Serbia	RAISE UP - Grass Root Actions, Innovative Approaches and Stakeholders Engagement to tackle Undeclared work	2017-2020	RAISE UP engaged key stakeholders in strategic discussions to develop more responsive policies and measures contributing to tackling undeclared work in agriculture using a holistic approach. Transnational actions included joint outreach education and awareness campaigns, transnational cooperative actions, fostering a high trust and high commitment culture, masterplans and roadmaps for future actions, and an online learning platform	DG of Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion	https://tinyurl.com/Raise-Up
Bulgaria	Cyprus, Estonia, Ireland	TransFormWork "Social partners	2019-2021	The objective of the project was to explore the impact of	Confederation of Independ	https://transformwork.eu/the-





	Malta, Romania and Sweden	together for digital transformation of the world of work. New dimensions of social dialogue deriving from the Autonomous Framework Agreement on Digitalisation		digitalisation on social dialogue at national level and to explore a number of good practice examples in the partner countries related to existing initiatives, practices and collective agreements in the context of the digital transformation of the world of work	ent Trade Unions in Bulgaria	project/
Bulgaria	Belgium, France, Italy, Ireland, North Macedonia, Poland, Spain and Sweden	Mapping European Social Economy: Employment, Social Dialogue and the European Pillar of Social Rights	2022-2024	The project aims to establish an up-to-date in-depth mapping on activity and representation of social economy players – both from the employers' and employees' side – within social dialogue institutions and various industrial relations settings in nine countries	DG of Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion	https://www.diesis.coop/mesmerplus/
North Macedonia		Strengthening social dialogue in North Macedonia	2015-2017	The purpose of the project was to support the sustainability of the civil sector through better partnership and cooperation between civil associations and trade unions, and to improve their skills and knowledge for advocacy and strategic management through lobbying, in order to improve the conditions for joint decision-making and policy-making at the local and national level, and the conditions for advocacy and strategic management by lobbying civil organisations	DG of Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion	https://www.ilo.org/budapest/what-we-do/projects/WCMS_679543/lang-en/index.htm
North Macedonia	Austria, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Germany, Italy and Serbia	E-MINDFUL: Enhancing European Migration Narrative to Develop Further Union's Long-term actions	2021-2023	The project Strengthening social dialogue in North Macedonia aims at improving social dialogue as a means to create more and better jobs in North Macedonia. It will support the	The European Commission Directorate General for Home Affairs and Migration;	https://e-mindful.eu/





				participation of social dialogue institutions in policy making at national and local levels, and foster the practice of regular consultations through the national and local economic and social councils. It will create conditions for the social partners so that they are better equipped to provide quality policy advice and deliver demand-driven services.	the German Federal Foreign Office; the Italian Ministry of Labour	
Italy		ALEXUS - un'Alleva per Uscire dal Sommerso: il dialogo sociale (A Lever to get out of the Underground: Social Dialogue)	2020-2022	The project aimed to promote better working conditions and more regular employment in the three productive sectors, and strengthen a unitary and inter-category approach to contrast the irregular economy and undeclared work, which would strengthen the social dialogue with the various stakeholders at territorial, national and European level.	Project co-financed by the European Union National Operational Program "Systems of Active Employment Policies", ESF Programming 2014 - 2020	https://www.lalombarda.it/news/al-via-il-progetto-alexus/
Italy		DISCUSS - Dialogo Sociale in UE per lo Sviluppo Sostenibile (Social dialogue in the EU for Sustainable Development)				https://www.formazione.discuss.it/
Italy		AGREE - Agricultural job rights to end foreign workers' exploitation				https://ec.europa.eu/mi-grant-integration/integration-practice/italy-spain-romania-agree-agricultural-job-rights-end-foreign-workers_en





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