



Agreement

A Green Mentality for Collective Bargaining

Summary of the comparative report

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There is consensus that the separation between labour and the environment, as well as that between the legal disciplines that regulate both domains, is meaningless and outdated. Since business activities affect the health and the environment of workers and human beings, synergies between the two spheres have to be created. Yet there is still a long way to go in order to bring together labour and environmental regulation.

In all the selected countries (France, the Great Britain, Hungary, Italy, the Netherlands and Spain) the legal systems regulating salaried work, on the one hand, and the environment, on the other hand, remain disconnected, although no formal obstacles exist to their integration. With regard to the scope for collective bargaining to become a means to integrate both spheres, no legal restrictions apply in any of the framework considered, although explicit references to workers and employers (or their representatives) to bargain over environmental aspects are far less evident.

It is up to the social partners to promote environmental sustainability as a goal for collective bargaining or to continue with the traditional inertia that divides labour and environmental regulation. Despite research shows how the social partners, especially trade unions, are more and more willing to negotiate environmental aspects, the narrative on the trade-off between labour and the environment is still evident, especially in the Hungarian context. Collective agreements could take a leading role in driving the just transition towards a low-carbon economy, but in practice they do not regard this mission as a priority. Environmental clauses in collective agreements are still exceptional and lack momentum.

One explanation is that the legal mechanisms in place to limit the impact of business activity on the environment (i.e. environmental law) legitimize firms to consider environmental aspects as their own prerogative. For this reason, in some legal systems, employers tend to discuss environmental commitments outside collective bargaining, including them into corporate social responsibility (CSR) mechanisms. By doing so, the company avoids enforceability, limiting the effectiveness of the tools to regulate environmental issues.

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