



Agreement

A Green Mentality for Collective Bargaining

Summary of the Italian report

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Despite the doctrinal emphasis on the need to create synergies between employment and environmental legislation, labour and the environment are subjected to silos regulation in the Italian jurisdiction. The principle of sustainability is not incorporated in Italian labour law legislation, nor environmental law has direct implications for labour law domain. In contrast, the Italian system of industrial relations stands out as a potential channel of integration and convergence between labour and environmental sustainability. In principle, legal and institutional characteristics of collective bargaining allow firms, workers' and employers' representatives to negotiate on environmental issues.

The historical evolution of industrial relations in Italy shades light on the continuity and tension between two contrasting patterns: one in which growth, income and job protection tend to prevail over environmental interests and those of local communities in contiguity with industries; the other in which social partners seek to advance the (controversial) ideas and ideals of just transition and sustainable developments in parallel with the defence of jobs and decent work.

Despite Treadmill of Production being the dominant logic of collective action during much of the modern (post-World War II) industrial era, a long wave of Just Transition can be identified starting from late 1960s, as Italian trade unions' struggles for decent and healthier working environments (indirectly) contributed to making production processes more sustainable for the broader environment and communities far beyond the workplace. The long wave of Just Transition identified in the industrial era of Italian capitalism is nowadays reinforced and made more visible by an explicit integration of labour and environmental protection through collective bargaining and social partnerships.

An overall consensus of national social partners is observable around the idea that, thanks to technological advancements, Industry 4.0 and the circular economy, growth can be decoupled from environmental degradation. There are many collective bargaining examples and Just Transition cases that already go in this direction. We find examples of multilateral alliances for sustainable development, as well as social dialogue and policy initiatives with clear commitments on the Just Transition, how to achieve it and how to make labour and environmental sustainability convergent. Social partnerships on these aspects include the involvement of workers representatives in environmental decisions or the integration of environmental policies within the occupational health and safety realm. Other examples include the negotiation of pay raises linked to green targets, such as energy efficiency and conservation, or the promotion of functional and geographical mobilities for workers involved in restructuring for environmental reasons. The negotiation of re-skilling, redeployment and early retirement plans to deal with job displacement is another example, along with

collective bargaining measures to make job classification systems more respondent to the green jobs labour market, or to promote sustainable forms of workforce mobility and commuting.

Despite this, between words and deeds on the need to combat global climate change is still a large gap, and opinions and reality on Just Transition are often oceans apart. While everyone agrees on the need for a Just Transition, the idea of justice on the ground, is still open to debate and conflict. In many cases, labour and capital interests still prevail over environmental ones and new dimensions of Treadmill of Production emerge in the Just Transition era.

What actually constitutes a constraint to be eliminated or a resource to be utilized is still unclear in contemporary social partners' strategies to promote Just Transition in Italy. As for any transitional phase in which a new stable model has not yet emerged, this situation generates pragmatic and adaptive behaviours in which contextual variables are of paramount importance. As a result, in contrast to other countries, different logics of collective action in Italy only partially fit into Just Transition theoretical classifications: instead of being mutual exclusive within a clearly identifiable country model and between different trade unions, they coexist and are intermingled in variable guises, depending on economic and institutional constraints that transitional practices involve, except for the most radical positions that confederal unions tend to avoid.

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