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IPA Institute of
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The European MW Directive and the National Action Plans to promote collective bargaining

Dr. Torsten Müller (ETUI)



Article 4.2 of the Directive on Action Plans



“In addition, Member States shall, where the collective bargaining coverage rate is **less than a threshold of 80%**, provide for a framework of enabling conditions for collective bargaining, either by law after **consultation of the social partners** or by agreement with them. The Member States shall establish such an **action plan**. (...). to **progressively increase the rate of collective bargaining coverage.**”

The **action plan** shall

- be established with the **involvement of social partners**
- set out a **clear timeline and concrete measures**
- be **reviewed regularly and updated** (...).
- be **made public** and notified to the Commission.

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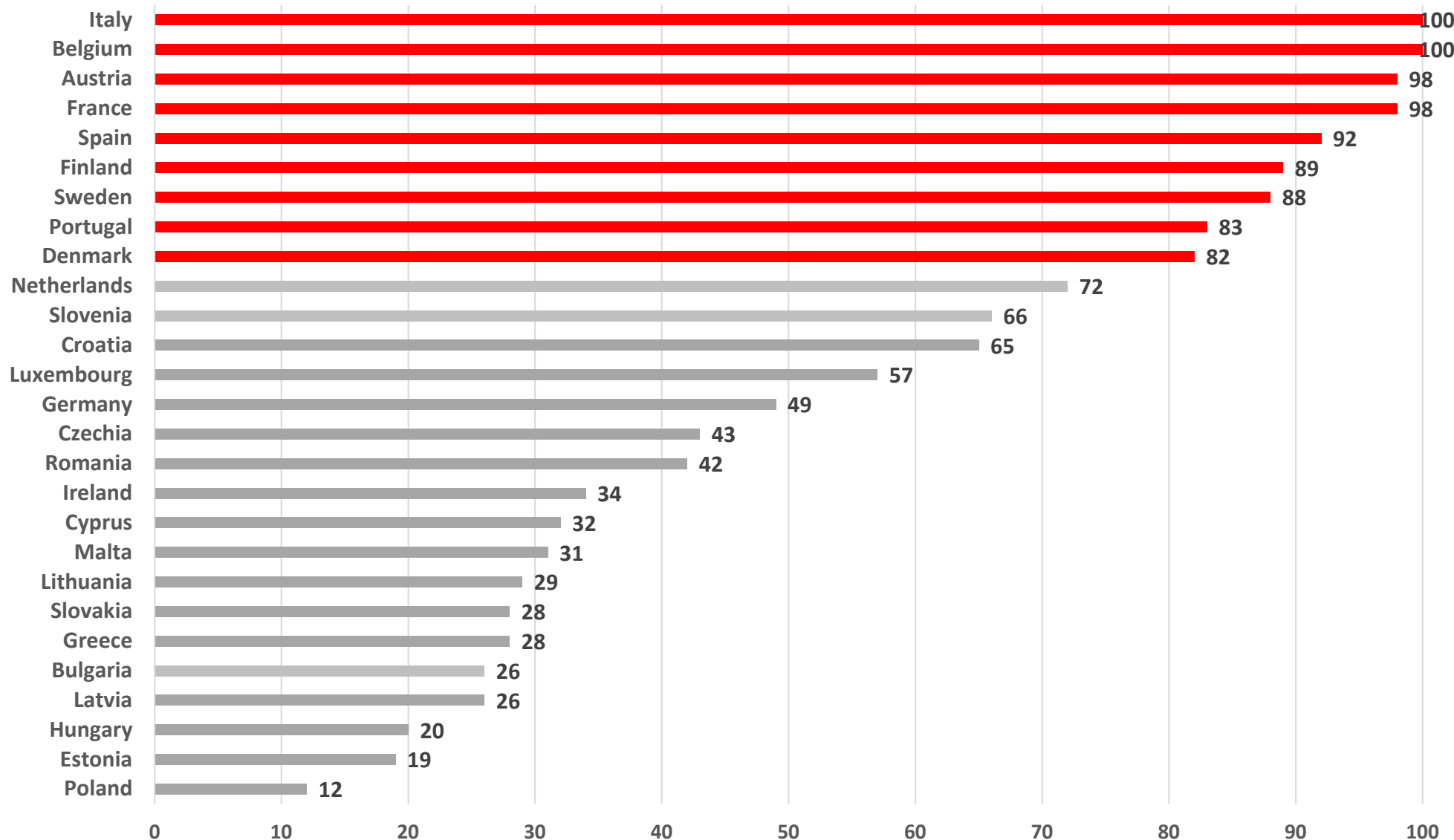
DIRECTIVES

DIRECTIVE (EU) 2022/2041 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL
of 19 October 2022
on adequate minimum wages in the European Union



CB coverage in EU Member States

(in %; 2024 or most recent year available)



Only **9 countries** meet the 80% reference value for adequate CB coverage.

- **Sectoral CB**
- **State support**

18 Member States need to establish an Action Plan to promote CB.

Source: OECD-AIAS ICTWSS Database, Version October 2025



Who has an action plan? (10 September 2026)

Have submitted an AP	Have NOT submitted an AP yet	Are NOT required to submit an AP
14 Countries	4 Countries	9 Countries
Bulgaria Czech Republic Estonia, Germany Greece, Ireland Latvia, Lithuania Luxembourg Malta, Netherlands Poland, Romania Slovakia	Croatia Cyprus Hungary Slovenia	Austria Belgium Denmark France Finland Italy Portugal Spain Sweden



Content of Action Plans: procedural issues

Clear timeframe	Budget assigned to measures	Tripartite structure for monitoring and evaluation
Bulgaria Czech Republic Germany Greece Ireland Netherlands Poland Slovakia	Czech Republic Ireland Lithuania Malta Poland Romania	Czech Republic Greece Luxembourg Poland Romania Slovakia



Content of Action Plans: “Soft” Measures

Quality and availability of data on CB and CAs	Awareness-creating	Research on different aspects of CB
Bulgaria Czech Republic Estonia Greece Ireland Luxembourg Poland Romania Slovakia	Bulgaria Czech Republic Estonia Greece Ireland Latvia Lithuania Luxembourg Poland Romania	Czech Republic Estonia Greece Ireland Latvia Lithuania Luxembourg Malta Netherlands Poland Slovakia



Soft measures: examples

Quality and Availability of data:

- Changing method of data gathering
- Establishing digital register of CAs (Greece and Poland)
- Improving existing portals and registers



Awareness-creating:

- Campaigns to communicate the significance of (sectoral) CB; disseminating best practice
- Including CB-related issues into the curriculum of schools and universities (NL, PL)
- Training for HR management in sectors with low CB coverage and SMEs (LU)

Research into various aspects of CB:

- Highly country-specific; but mainly about identifying obstacles to CB



Content of Action Plans: measures to improve the bargaining parties' capacity to act

Capacity-building	Provisions aimed at unions	Provisions aimed at employers
Bulgaria Czech Republic Greece Ireland Lithuania Malta Poland Romania Slovakia	Germany Ireland Netherlands	Estonia Poland



Improving capacity to act: examples

Capacity-building:

- Joint trainings for unions and employers on negotiation skills, conflict resolution and other issues related to bargaining process
- Provision of codes and handbooks of best practice



Measures aimed at unions' capacity to act: vague commitments

- Increasing protection of union representatives (IE and NL)
- Improving physical and digital union access to workplaces (DE and IE)
- Improving tax deductibility of union fees (DE)

Incentives to improve employers' willingness to engage in CB: discussion

- Allowing CAs to derogate from the law regarding working time (EE, LU)
- Tax provisions and access to training funds for employers covered by CA (PL)
- CB Conditionality: temporary quota-based employment (DE)



Content of Action Plans: measures aimed at strengthening sectoral collective bargaining



Extension of CAs	Public Procurement	Confederations signing sectoral CAs	Setting up sectoral structures	Other institutional measures
Greece Malta Poland	Germany Ireland Netherlands Poland (Luxembourg)	Estonia Greece Latvia Malta	Ireland Lithuania Romania	Bulgaria Greece Poland Romania Slovakia



Other institutional measures: examples

Strengthening the Labour Inspectorate

- Romania and Slovakia

**INSTITUTIONS
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Speeding up arbitration processes

- Greece

Ensuring full “ultra-activity” of collective agreements

- Greece

Expanding issues to be covered by collective agreements

- Poland

Extending scope of CB to new forms of work such as digital platforms

- Bulgaria



Best practice so far: Greece



Ticks all the boxes:

- AP based on **Tripartite Social Agreement**: clear commitment of all parties involved to a collective bargaining coverage of at least **80 %**
- Formation of a **Tripartite Working Group** to monitor, evaluate and support the implementation of the AP; annual evaluation report on progress in coverage and implementation of the AP
- **Concrete time frame** with **substantial legal changes** (already adopted!)
 - Facilitating the **extension** of Collective Agreements
 - Full **ultra-activity** after expiry of collective agreements
 - Speeding up **arbitration and conflict resolution** procedures
- Increased **inspections of labour inspectorate** on compliance with CAs



Preliminary Assessment of Action Plans

More bark than real bite:

➤ Strong focus on Soft Issues:

better data, more research, awareness-creating

➤ Weak on substantial issues with immediate impact

few legal/institutional changes to support sectoral CB; few measures aimed at improving bargaining parties' capacity to act

➤ Often no or rather vague timeframe and extremely vague and non-committal language

frequent use of terms such as 'explore', 'assessment', 'test', 'pilot', and 'potential'

➤ Often weak participation of unions/employers' associations in the implementation process





Important role of Commission...

... in ensuring proper implementation of Action Plans



- **Monitoring** and **evaluating** Action Plans and **ensuring effectiveness** of Action Plans: revision of Action Plans if found to be insufficient to progressively increase coverage
- Starting **infringement procedure** if Member State fails to comply with requirements of the Action Plan as part of its implementation
- Initiating **further measures** to promote CB: Action Plan for the European Commission



Action Plan for the Commission



Action Plan to promote Collective Bargaining for the European Commission:



- Revision of **public procurement** Directives
- Ensure **proper implementation** of all EU instruments addressing CB
- Introducing **CB conditionality** linking financial support of MS to serious efforts to promote CB and to increase CB coverage
- Integrating the **promotion of CB** into the annual procedure of socio-economic coordination and surveillance in the context of the **European Semester**
- Maintaining financial support for **capacity-building measures** aimed at promoting CB



- What makes a good action plan?
- What are, from a trade union perspective, two key measures to promote collective bargaining in your country?
- What are measures to ensure the effectiveness of action plans?

Thank you very much for your attention!

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Dr Torsten Müller
is Senior Researcher
at the European Trade
Union Institute (ETUI)
in Brussels, Belgium.

Prof. Dr Thorsten Schulten
is head of the Collective
Agreements Archive
of the Institute of
Economic and Social
Research (WS) of the
Hans-Böckler-Stiftung
in Düsseldorf, Germany.
He is also honorary
professor at the
University of Tübingen,
Germany.

More bark than bite – a first assessment of the National Action Plans to promote collective bargaining

Torsten Müller and Thorsten Schulten

Policy recommendations

The European Union (EU) Directive on Adequate Minimum Wages requires Member States with collective bargaining coverage below 80% to adopt National Action Plans, with a view to promoting and progressively increasing coverage. To be effective, these Plans should meet the following criteria:

- Core measures: plans must prioritise legislative or institutional changes that promote sectoral collective bargaining, supplemented by 'soft' measures to raise awareness of the importance of (sectoral) bargaining and improve data quality.
- Capacity and readiness: measures are supposed to strengthen the bargaining parties' negotiation capacity. More specifically, they should address the employers' readiness to engage in sectoral negotiations, including the establishment of sectoral employers' organisations, where needed.
- Implementation and funding: plans must include defined timeframes, dedicated funding and permanent tripartite structures for annual evaluation and revision.
- Monitoring and assessment: the European Commission (EC) must critically assess the adequacy of the Plans, require revisions when necessary, and initiate infringement procedures against Member States that fail to submit a Plan.
- EU-level support: the EC should also establish a 'European Action Plan' to support Member States in providing a framework of enabling conditions for collective bargaining.

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Prof. Dr. Thorsten Schulten

Thorsten-Schulten@boeckler.de

Dr. Torsten Müller

tmueller@etui.org

<https://www.etui.org/publications/more-bark-bite-first-assessment-national-action-plans-promote-collective-bargaining>

<https://www.etui.org/publications/here-comes-sun>