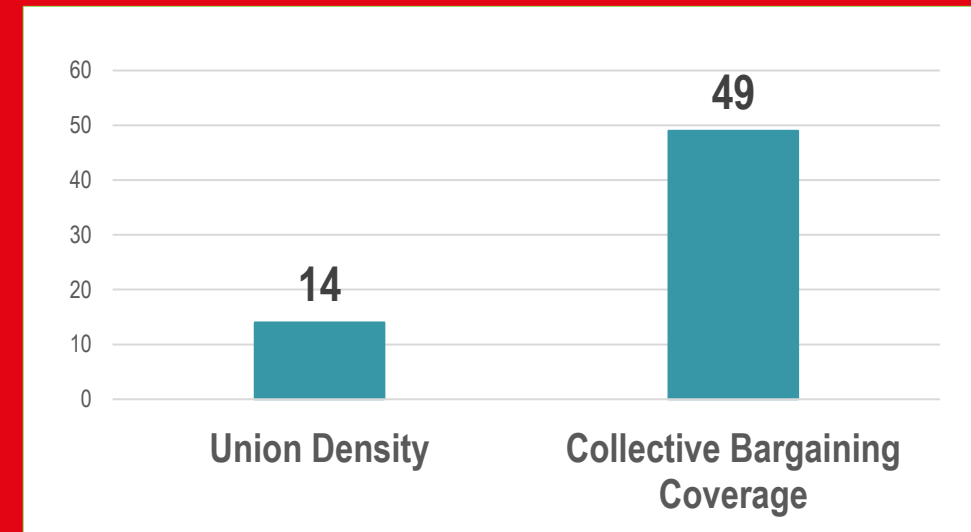




NATIONAL ACTION PLANS TO PROMOTE COLLECTIVE BARGAINING – THE CASE OF GERMANY

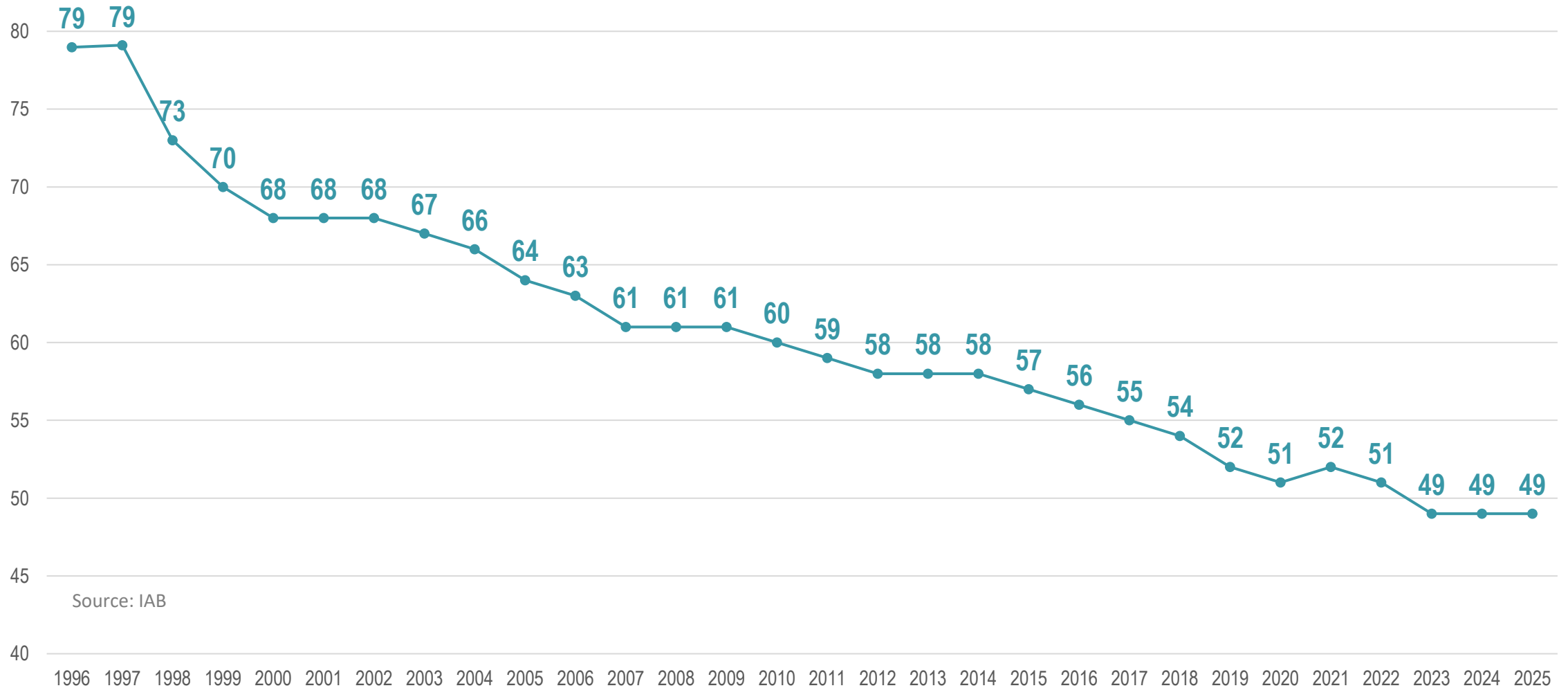
Thorsten Schulten

18th Annual TURI Conference
20 October 2026, Warsaw



Collective Bargaining Coverage in Germany

in % of all workers



Collective Bargaining Coverage in Germany

in % of all workers



How to reverse this trend?



Strengthening Collective Bargaining in Germany

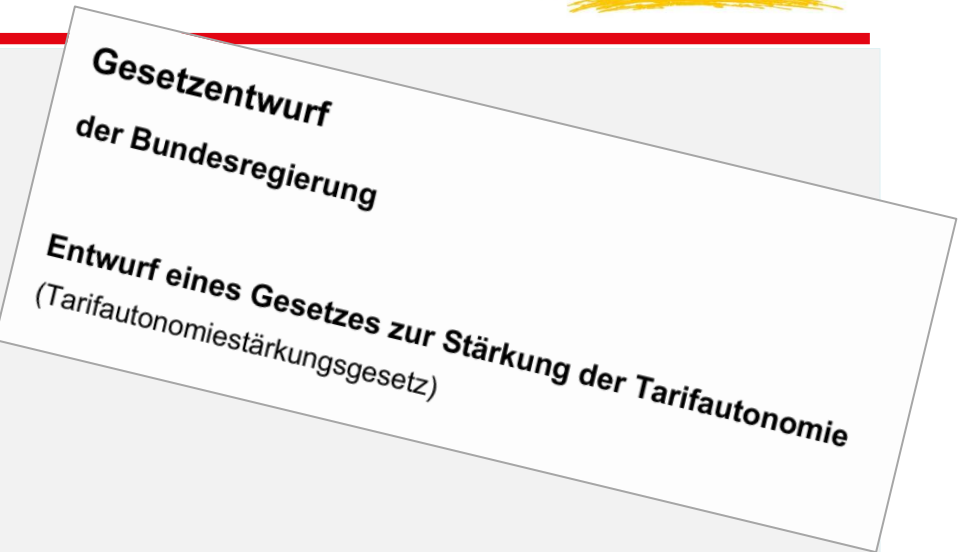


Act to Strengthen Collective Bargaining Autonomy (2014)

- **Introduction** of a statutory minimum wage
- **Easing the requirements** for extension of collective agreements

Results:

- **Stabilization** of collective bargaining in low-wage sectors
- **No more extensions** due to persistent veto power of employers
- **Continuous decline** of the collective bargaining coverage



Strengthening Collective Bargaining in Germany



Coalition Agreement of the current German Government composed by Christian and Social Democrats (2025)

“Our aim is to increase collective bargaining coverage. Wages set by collective agreements must once again become *the norm* and must not remain *the exception*.”

Measures:

1. Improvement of **Tax Deductibility** of Trade Union Membership Fees
2. National Act on **Public Procurement** and Collective Bargaining (*Bundestariftreuegesetz*)
3. A Right of Trade Unions to **Digital Access** to the Workplace



Verantwortung für Deutschland

Koalitionsvertrag zwischen
CDU, CSU und SPD

21. Legislaturperiode

April 2025

German National Action Plan

to promote Collective Bargaining (July 2026)

Three main Measures:

1. Improvement of **Tax Deductibility** of Trade Union Membership Fees

Adopted in December 2025: Depending on the tax rate, union members receive a **refund of between 25 and 35%** of their membership fee.

2. National Act on **Public Procurement** and Collective Bargaining

Adopted in March 2026: Very limited: only national-level public contract, many exceptions, complicated procedure etc.

3. A Right of Trade Unions to **Digital Access** to the Workplace
- To be adopted in the current parliamentary term!**



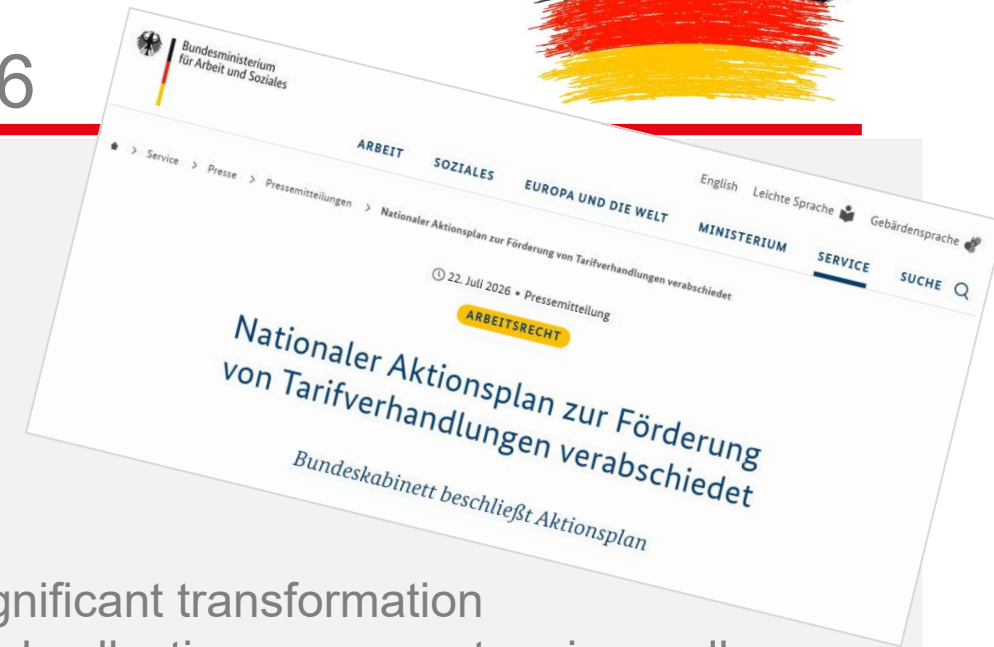
German National Action Plan

to promote Collective Bargaining (July 2026)



Further Measures:

1. **Short-term work permits** for seasonal and project-based work for third-country nationals, only for companies covered by collective agreements; **(adopted in August 2023)**
2. **State Qualification Allowance** for companies affected by significant transformation pressures. Precondition: A works agreement, a company-level collective agreement or, in smaller companies, an employer declaration must regulate the relevant training needs and the use of the allowance. **(adopted in July 2023)**
3. **Climate Protection Contracts**: Companies covered by collective agreements have easier access, but not exclusive **(adopted in March 2024)**
4. **Working Time Act**: Companies can introduce a weekly rather than daily maximum working time by a collective agreement **(not yet adopted, strong resistance by employer and Christian Democrats)**,



Consultation for a National Action Plan

Highly Controversial Views



Trade Unions (DGB)

- *Tax Deductibility of Trade Union Membership Fees*
- *National Act on Public Procurement and Collective Bargaining*
- *Digital Access for unions to the workplace*
- Reform of procedure to **extent collective agreements**
- **Ban on OT membership in employers' associations**
- Strengthening of the after-effect of collective agreements
- **Better protection against Union-Busting**
- CB Coverage as criteria for all kind for state subsidies
- **Continued application** of collective agreements in the case of outsourcing
- **CB provisions for union members only**
- Right of associations to bring legal action



Employers (BDA)

- **More flexibility** through more possibilities **to derogate** from collective agreements at company level
- **Modular Collective Agreements** where companies could choose the provisions they like
- Limitation of the after-effect of collective agreements
- **Limitation of the right to strike**

German National Action Plan to promote Collective Bargaining (July 2026)



Conclusion:



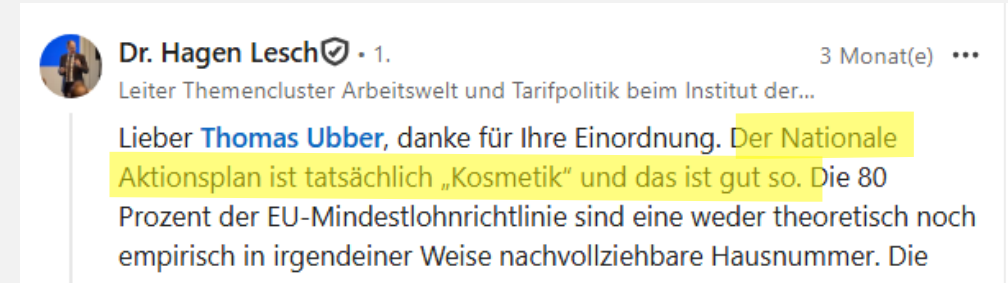
“The plan remains **too unambitious** to bring about a rapid shift towards higher collective agreement coverage.”



“The National Action Plan is indeed **just ‘window dressing’**, and that’s a good thing.”

Hagen Lesch

CB Expert of the Employer’s funded Institut der deutschen Wirtschaft (IW)
Comment on LinkedIn, 22 July 2026



In order to reverse the trend of a declining bargaining coverage, Germany still needs a comprehensive reform programme to promote collective bargaining !!!

Many Thanks for Your Attention!

EINTRETEN FÜR DIE
#TARIFWENDE

Conference on
25th November 2026 in Berlin:



Prof. Dr. Thorsten Schulten

Thorsten-Schulten@boeckler.de

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/thorsten-schulten-340670252/>

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