

Discussion about action plans to promote collective bargaining



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**More bark than bite – comparative assessment of
National Action Plans to promote collective bargaining**

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1. The directive's requirements for action plans

Criteria to be met

2. Action plans submitted so far

A quantitative overview

3. The content of action plans

A comparative assessment

4. The role of the European Commission...

... in monitoring action plans



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

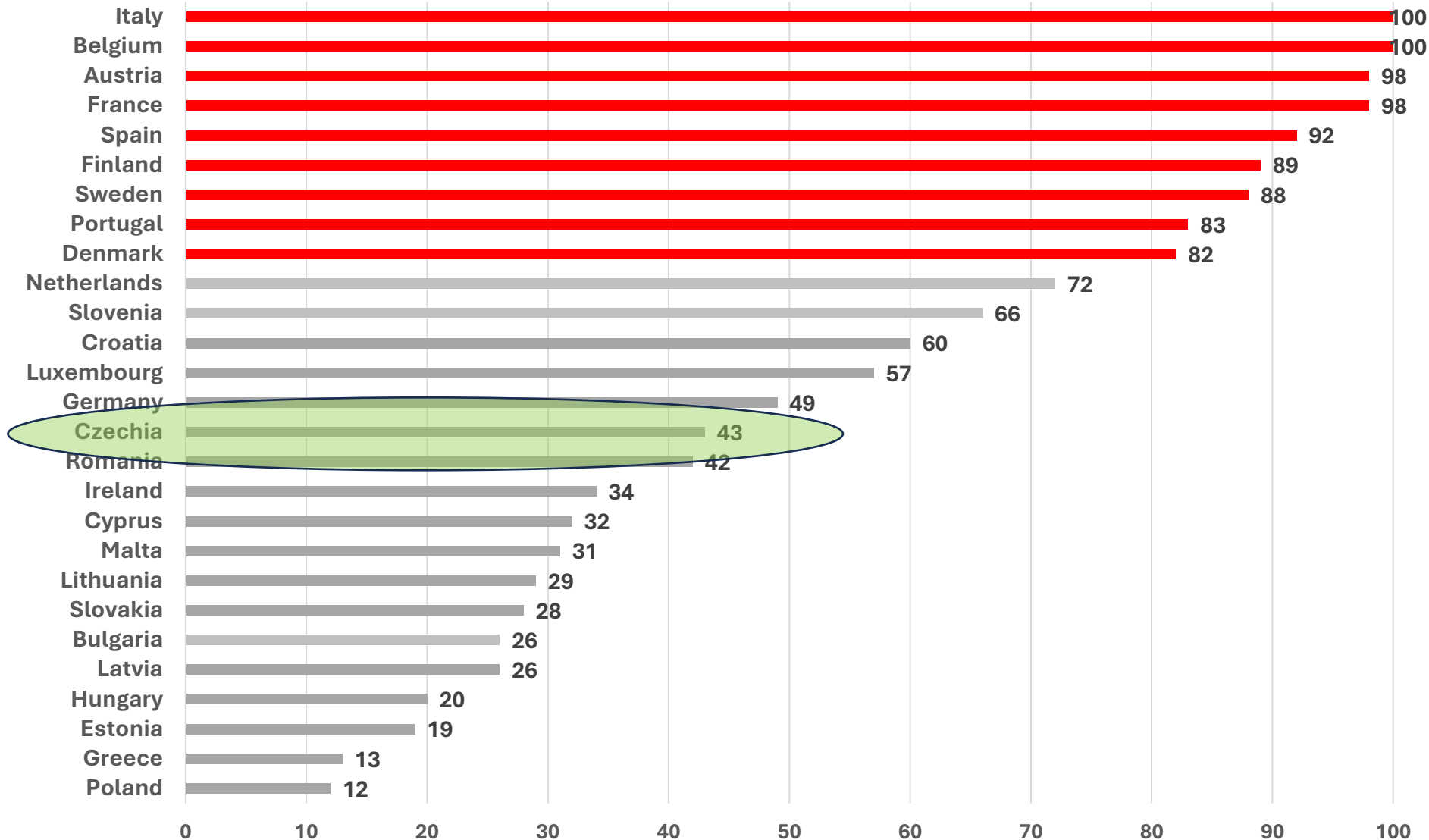
DIRECTIVE (EU) 2022/2041 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL
of 19 October 2022
on adequate minimum wages in the European Union



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



Action plans: state of play



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



Content of Action Plans: procedural issues



Clear timeframe	Budget assigned to measures	Tripartite structure for monitoring and evaluation
Czech Republic Greece Ireland Netherlands Poland Slovakia	Czech Republic Ireland Lithuania Malta Poland Romania	Czech Republic Greece 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
Czech Republic Estonia Greece Ireland Poland Romania Slovakia	Czech Republic Estonia Greece Ireland Latvia Lithuania Poland Romania	Czech Republic Estonia Greece Ireland Latvia Lithuania 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 (PL)

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
Czech Republic Greece Ireland Lithuania Malta	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 (IE)

Measures aimed at employers' willingness to engage in CB: discussion

- Incentive by allowing CAs to derogate from the law as regards working time (EE)
- Incentive through tax provisions and special access to training funds for employers covered by a CA (Poland)



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	Ireland Netherlands Poland	Estonia Greece Latvia Malta	Ireland Lithuania Romania	Greece Poland Romania Slovakia

Other institutional measures: examples

Strengthening the Labour Inspectorate

- Romania and Slovakia

Speeding up arbitration processes

- Greece

Ensuring full “ultra-activity” of collective agreements

- Greece

Expanding issues to be covered by collective agreements

- Poland

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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



▶ Thank you very much for your attention!



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

Collective bargaining and minimum wage regimes in the European Union

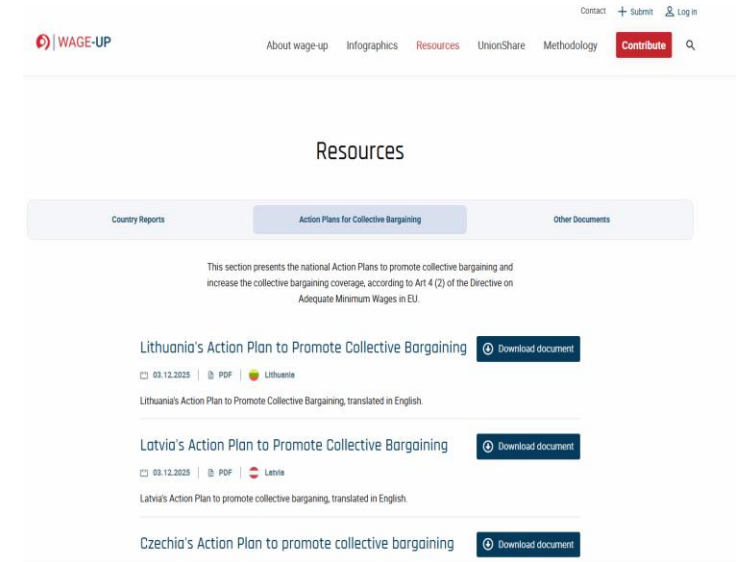
The transposition of the EU Directive on Adequate Minimum Wages in the EU27

Edited by
Torsten Müller

Background Analysis 2023.01
European Trade Union Institute

etui.

<https://www.etui.org/publications/collective-bargaining-and-minimum-wage-regimes-european-union>



<https://wage-up.etuc.org/resources>