TRADE UNIONS IN THE DIGITAL AGE: COUNTRY FICHE ON BULGARIAN MANUFACTURING SECTOR

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1. GOVERNMENTAL POLICIES FOR THE DIGITALISATION OF THE ECONOMY

The drastic changes caused by the technological leap inevitably lead to the need for changes in governance and institutions, as well as the implementation of specific economic policies. The digital transformation will require significant investment from the private and public sectors. The more these investments slow down over time, the more difficult it is to access finance, the more funds each worker will need in the future to increase his/her labour productivity, and each entrepreneur to increase his/her competitiveness.

Regardless of the institutional steps taken so far, Bulgaria lags significantly behind in strategic planning in the field of digitalisation of the economy. Here it is important to mention that the establishment of e-government in Bulgaria is still incomplete, which complicates the process of digitalisation in institutions. In Bulgaria, investment in research and development as a share of the GDP is in last place compared to other EU Member States. At an average European level of about 3% of GDP, in Bulgaria this percentage is still less than 1% of the country's GDP.

Overall, a number of things need to be done, in terms of specific economic policies, so that Bulgaria can start catching up with other economies, such as: 1) Establishment of a National Centre for Mechatronics and Clean Technologies, 2) Development of European Supercomputer Centre; and 3) Centre for Excellence in Big Data and Artificial Intelligence (ESC, 2020). With close cooperation with business and development of public-private partnerships, similar projects can be an effective tool for increasing the level of digitalisation in the Bulgarian economy.

In the meantime, the Bulgarian government published for discussion at the end of June 2020 a preliminary vision of the Strategy for the Development of Artificial Intelligence in Bulgaria until 2030 ("Artificial Intelligence for Smart Growth"), and on July 15, 2020 the national strategic document "Digital Transformation of Bulgaria for the period 2020 - 2030". At the end of August 2020, the final version of the Draft Concept for the Development of Artificial Intelligence in Bulgaria until 2030 was presented for discussion. A team of researchers from the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences and external experts drafted the **"National Strategy for the Development of Artificial Intelligence"**. The aim is to support the creation of strategic documents for the digital transformation of Bulgaria in the

next decade. The proposed project is based on European Commission documents that consider artificial intelligence as one of the main drivers of digital transformation in Europe, and a significant factor in ensuring the competitiveness of the European economy and a high quality of life. Priority sectors have been proposed for the first stage of implementation of the Strategy (2021-2023): scientific and applied research; smart agriculture; intelligent data retrieval in healthcare.

In the context of planning for the next programming period 2021-2027, in the process of developing the National Development Program "Bulgaria 2030", the important decisions for the progress of Bulgaria are to be found. These decisions must be the result of a broad national debate with the social partners and citizens. In Bulgaria, various aspects of digitalisation are covered by many national strategic and regulatory documents, and at the same time the responsibilities for them are distributed among many institutions. This means that there is a lack of synergy between the individual programming documents, demarcation and complementarity. This further complicates the institutional response to the processes. Very often it is unnecessarily tied to administrative

requirements. This division of goals and tasks leads to difficult communication and slows down many of the processes.

Finally, it is important to say that all EU member states have adopted their own strategies for the country's transition to the Fourth Industrial Revolution. There is no such strategy only in Bulgaria. However, the Ministry of Economy developed a concept for the country's transition to Industry 4.0 in July 2017. This concept should be the basis for the development of the strategy. At the moment, the formed working group at the Ministry of Economy is not taking significant steps in this direction.

Main achievements get by the plans and the gaps to be overcome

The penetration of digital technologies in Bulgarian economy and society. Bulgaria continues to occupy unsatisfactory positions in various indices and surveys measuring the penetration of digital technologies in the economy and society (DESI, 2019), the digitalisation of the industry (EC, 2019), the readiness for the future of production (WEF, 2018).

Figure 1. Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI) 2019

Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI) 2019 ranking

■ 1 Connectivity ■ 2 Human capital ■ 3 Use of internet services ■ 4 Integration of digital technology ■ 5 Digital public services

■ 1 Свързаност ■ 2 Човешки капитал ■ 3 Използване на интернет услуги ■ 4 Внедряване на цифрови технологии ■ 5 Цифрови обществени услуги

изт. https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/desi
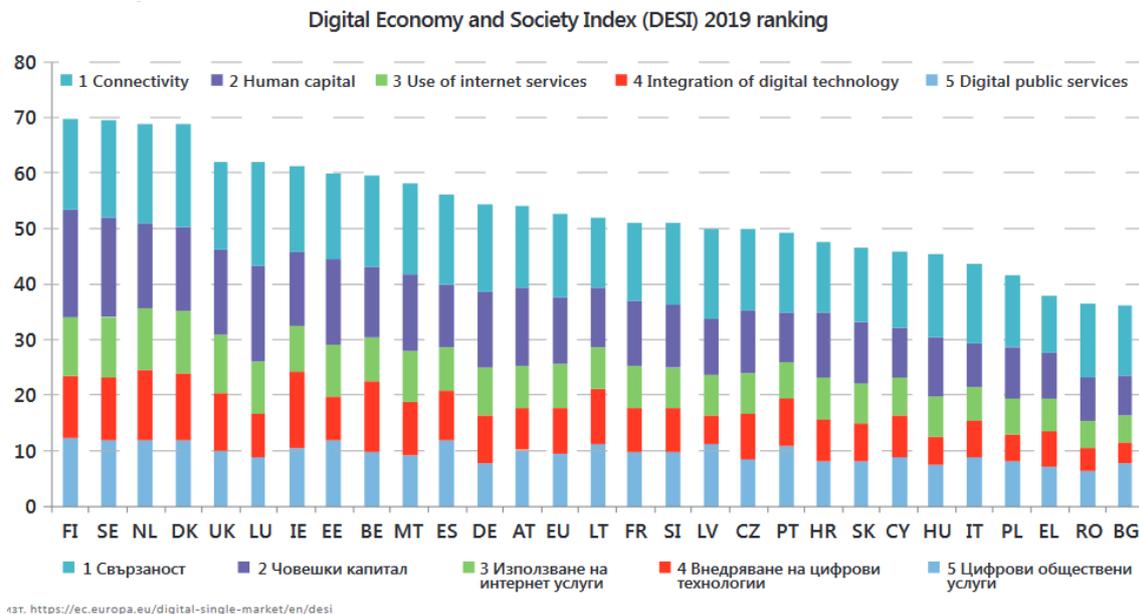
Source: Eurostat, 2019

As seen in the Figure above, at the end of 2019, the average level of DESI for the EU was 52.5, while the value of Bulgaria was 36.2. This means that the level of the DESI index was 68% of the EU average. Bulgaria registered an average growth rate of 5.6% over the last seven years, but the average growth rate for the EU is 5.9%. This means that Bulgaria will easily reach a value of 52.5 by 2030, but it will be very far from the European average then, i.e. when reporting the cumulative growth we may find ourselves in a situation where the value for Bulgaria is then even less than 68% compared to the European average, which we currently report.

The challenge of technological unemployment. Technological innovation can lead to robotisation and digitalisation of activities that were performed by the labour factor at a previous stage. In this way, the production process is optimised on the one hand, but on the other hand the unemployment rate may not change or even increase. This could be a logical explanation for the assumptions of both Smith (2016), Tosi (2014) and other economists (Perry, 2012), who over the past decade have increasingly argued that economic growth does not necessarily lead to a reduction in the level of unemployment. The risk to the Bulgarian economy from the development of such a process in the next decade is completely possible. From the point of view of the labour market, it is important to say that the jobs that will be endangered by the digitalisation processes represent a significant part of the labour force in Bulgaria, and for them there is a risk of the impossibility to

provide alternative employment, which will lead to an increase in structural unemployment. According to studies of MLSP (2019) and ESC (2018), the most affected types of jobs and qualifications will be: 1) Administrative services, 2) Wholesale and retail, 3) Transport and logistics, 4) Routine processes in industry and construction, 5) Consulting services, etc.

Skills needs. According to WEF (2016), 65% of children who are now starting their primary education will eventually work in completely new professions that do not even exist at the moment. Therefore, it is necessary to build a qualitatively new educational infrastructure that meets the requirements of digital transformation. In recent years, the Bulgarian schools have made a big step towards the implementation of the learning process entirely in an electronic environment.

The ageing of the population and professional obsolescence. The relationship between the ageing of the population and productivity in Bulgaria follows the model of inverted U, which shows that the national population is ageing, and productivity is declining. Accordingly, the probability of increasing labour productivity without investment in new technologies decreases statistically. At the same time, there is another trend: more than 80% of people born after 1990 are active on social media and consciously use the internet and digital devices (GDC, 2018). In this regard, the preconditions are created for the growth of digital inequalities between generations, which

is a threat to jobs and employment. The general trend for Bulgaria is expressed in the ageing of some professions and their gradual elimination, but at the same time with the emergence of new professions. However, in Bulgaria there is no specialised department/institution that monitors the quantity and quality of change in professions. The National Agency for Vocational Education and Training (NAVET), established in 1999 at the Council of Ministers, according to the Vocational Education and Training Act, updates the list of professions at the proposal of the institutions (National Statistical Institute and Ministry of Labor and Social Policy) twice a year.

Regulatory gaps. Bulgaria faces the issue of protecting consumers and their rights when shopping from online stores registered outside the EU. The main reason is that these purchases do not have the protection that the consumer has when shopping within the EU. The successful development of an internet-based economy implies developed systems for online payments and high consumer confidence in them. Bulgaria ranks first in the use of cash payments in the delivery of products ordered online, with 62% of respondents compared to the EU average of 18% (CCS, 2015). In addition, new forms of employment require a complete rethinking of social security and taxation as a system. Reforms in these systems, as well as a number of other problems in the regulatory environment, need to be highlighted in the context of forthcoming societal changes and debates. The opportunities provided by digital transformation, the use of AI, the

Internet of Things and blockchains can be applied in urban planning, development and implementation of intelligent transport and energy systems, health and social services, agriculture, education, etc.

Difficulties for SMEs and steps to be done. The main difficulties faced by SMEs in Bulgaria in the supply chain and their integration into the processes of the digital economy can be summarised to: (1) Lack of awareness about high-tech; (2) Lack of financial resources for the purchase of the necessary technology; (3) Impossibility to invest in research and innovation activities for creation of the necessary technology; (4) Limited access to solutions for testing modern technologies; (5) Lack of highly qualified experts in the field of ICT.

It is necessary to implement a set of measures to support Bulgarian companies for the development and distribution of their own products and the transition to the production of "smart products", through:

- Use of Centres of Excellence as shared facilities or sites to provide access to leading techniques and technologies, best practices, research, support, and training with a focus on digitalisation, which will ensure the dissemination of new innovative business models, processes, services and technologies for Industry 4.0, including through the use of 5G mobile networks. The centers are part of the Science and Education for Smart Growth Operational Programme in Bulgaria (co-funded by both the European Social Fund and the European Regional Development Fund). A total of BGN 348 million was set aside from this programme for the construction and development of a total of 13 centers (4 for centres of excellence and 9 centers of competencies). The centres gather the efforts of 59 institutes of BAS (Bachelor of Applied Science), universities, and scientific and business organisations. The intervention is aimed at raising the level and market orientation of the research activities of scientific organisations, as well as supporting the development of the capacity for research (including the realisation of excellence) and innovation. This intervention facilitates new partnerships with businesses, and the creation of new enterprises are stimulated.

- Building a demonstration eco-system in the field of digitalisation and "Industry 4.0", through test centres for testing/approbation of technologies and virtual productions, to support the process of accelerated integration of Bulgaria in European and international programmes, initiatives and networks, which are related to the development and implementation of Industry 4.0.

- Support to SMEs to increase the capacity to implement digital technologies related to their business and operational processes for further digitalisation in key areas of process management, computerisation and connectivity based on standard models and protocols.

- Development and implementation of programmes to improve the

management capacity for working with digital technologies, such as good manufacturing practices, statistical models; use of cloud technologies and social media; implementation of online sales and electronic invoicing.

Development of inequalities. In parallel with the introduction of new technologies in the EU, there is a process of increasing inequality in income, wealth, intellectual property, etc. Facts and arguments can be found in a number of supranational analyses (Osborne and Frey, 2013), reports of the EC, statements of EESC (ECO/410, 2018), official Eurostat data and others. Wages are the result of the influence of many factors, and the Bulgarian worker may lose competitiveness due to the lack of a consistent policy on the part of the state regarding issues related to technological transformations. This is due to the fact that the degree of technological progress also determines the productivity of each worker. The link between labour productivity and wages is about to be lost (Kostov, 2019). It is currently asymmetric in Bulgaria, but in the long run the relationship between the two variables will weaken, i.e. labour productivity will play an increasingly smaller role in determining wages. The main challenges for labour in Bulgaria from the entry of non-standard forms of employment as a result of technological progress can be summarised as follows:

1) Loss and transformation of jobs requiring low and medium levels of skills and the creation of others that require higher levels of competencies;

2) Erosion of labour standards due to the lack of a definitive apparatus and direct commitments by governments;

3) Expansion of income inequalities;

4) Increasing the difference between the required available skills from businesses and higher education.

It has virtually been proven that the countries that can afford the application of new technologies at the earliest possible stage will secure lower labour costs, higher productivity, as well as a leading position in the competitive environment (Schwab, 2016). Numerous indicators and comparative analyses show the unfavourable position of Bulgaria and the countries in the region with regard to digital development, which may be a key factor for the future development of regional inequalities even within the EU-27.

2.
GENERAL INDICATORS
# FOR THE MANUFACTURING SECTOR

The contribution of manufacturing to Bulgarian GDP. Economically developed countries, including Bulgaria, are increasingly restructuring towards service-prevailing economies at the expense of manufacturing. However, manufacturing and key manufacturing sub-sectors, especially those of regional importance, continue to play an important role in the European economy. Despite its share of less than 25% of the local economy, in recent years manufacturing has increased its weight in both the total output and the export of the country. The industry employs more than 70,000 people in Sofia, and salaries still remain below the average for the city, despite growing significantly in the last few years

Industry represents 23.8% of the GDP, and 30% of the workforce is employed in the industrial sector overall in the country. The industrial sector continues to rely heavily on the manufacturing sub-sectors (metallurgical, chemical, and machine building), which are estimated to contribute to 14% of GDP (World Bank). However, the most dynamic sectors are textile, pharmaceutical products, cosmetic products, the mobile communication and the software industry.

The tertiary sector has more than doubled its contribution to the country's economy since the end of the communist system, accounting for 59.2% of the GDP and employing 63% of the workforce. Tourism is one of the fastest growing sectors, with more than 9.3 million tourists visiting the country in 2018 (+4.4% y-o-y), accounting for 11.7% of GDP and 11% of total employment.

Figure 2: Industrial (manufacturing) Production Index (2015 = 100)
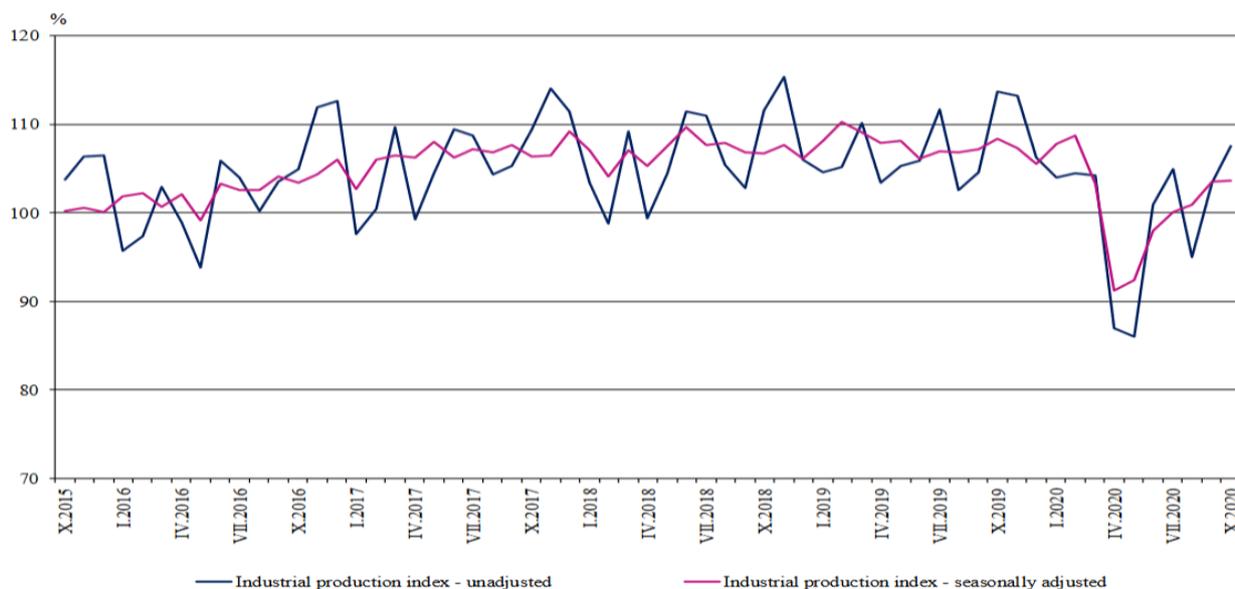
**Source:** National Statistical Institute (NSI)

Industrial production. According to preliminary data, in October 2020 the Industrial Production Index, seasonally adjusted, increased by 0.2% as compared to September 2020. In October 2020 the working day adjusted Industrial Production Index fell by 3.9% in comparison with the same month of 2019. In October 2020 as compared to September 2020, the seasonally adjusted Industrial Production Index rose in the manufacturing by 1.0%, while the production went down in the mining and quarrying industry by 9.0% and in the electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning supply by 1.7%. The most significant production increases in manufacturing were registered in the manufacture of motor vehicles, trailers and semi-trailers (+15.1%), leather and related products (+14.2%), in the manufacture of textiles (+9.3%) and in the manufacture of basic pharmaceutical products and preparations (+7.1%).

Important decreases were seen in the manufacture of other goods (-6.7%), including basic metals (-2.9%), and in the manufacture of tobacco products (-2.4%). The Annual Industrial Production Index calculated from working day adjusted data fell in the mining and quarrying industry by 12.7%, in the electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning supply by 5.4% and in manufacturing by 2.9%. In manufacturing, the more considerable decreases in the manufacturing industry, compared to the same month of the previous year were registered in the manufacture of tobacco products (-36.1%), in other manufacturing (-31.2%), in the repair and installation of machinery and equipment (-21.5%), and in the manufacture of basic metals (-12.8%). Major increases were seen in the manufacture of motor vehicles, trailers, semi-trailers and in the manufacture of other transport equipment (+21.3%), in the manufacture of electrical equipment

(+15.8%); in the manufacture of basic pharmaceutical products and pharmaceutical preparations (+11.7%); in the manufacture of fabricated metal products, except machinery and equipment (+11.5%).

Figure 3. Changes of Industrial Production Indices compared to the same month of the previous year (Working day adjusted)
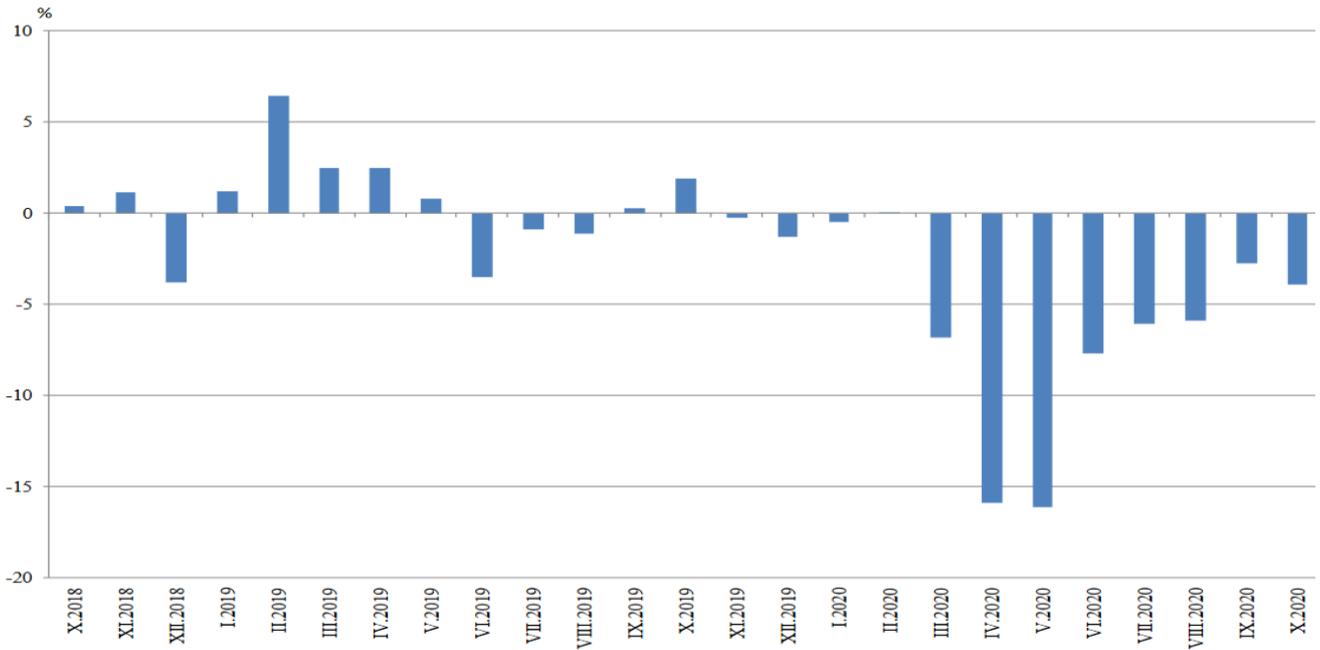
Source: NSI

3.
FUNDAMENTALS OF INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS IN BULGARIA

Trade union density. The trade union density in Bulgaria is approximately 15%, which means that around 400,000 people are union members among total of 3.2 million people in employment. Various studies (IMF, 2019; OECD, 2020) show that non-standard workers in Bulgaria are 40-50% less likely to receive adequate social and labour protection and to join a union, which affects their overall work environment. According to a 2018 World Bank and IMF survey, among much of the developed world (including Bulgaria, which is in the sample), many people believe that public services and social benefits are insufficient and difficult to access at this stage. More than half of the population in Bulgaria believe that they do not receive a fair share of benefits compared to taxes they pay.

Social dialogue. Social dialogue takes place mainly on a tripartite basis within the NCTC (National Council for Tripartite Cooperation), where all nationally represented workers' and employers' organisations as well as government representatives participate. There are two nationally representative trade union organisations in Bulgaria: the Confederation of Independent Trade Unions in Bulgaria (CITUB) and the Confederation of Labor Podkrepa (CL

Podkrepa). There are five nationally representative employers' organisations (AIKB, CEIBG, BCCI, SSE and BIA). The tripartite sectoral dialogue is in crisis, despite the initiative of the social partners, in particular the trade unions, to intensify it. The revitalisation and content of the activities of the Sectoral and Branch Councils for Tripartite Cooperation are especially important in the context of new challenges (Covid-19, the Green Deal, Industry 4.0), which undoubtedly have a significant sectoral dimension and need shared solutions and policies. The participation of the state in the dialogue within the sectors of manufacturing, construction and agriculture is implemented mainly through the Ministry of Economy, the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Regional Development and the Ministry of Energy. In general, the state's participation in the sectoral dialogue within most industrial sectors is assessed as weakened and characterised by a lack of interest. Bilateral social partnership in industrial sectors, unlike the tripartite one, is viable and, leads to development and enrichment encompassing new areas and new forms. It is carried out between the branch trade union federations and the branch structures of the nationally representative employers' organisations. Bilateral social partnership in industrial

sectors is not limited to actions related to the negotiation of sectoral/branch collective labour agreements (CLAs), but is aimed at solving problems in the sector as a whole.

Collective bargaining. In all sectors of the Bulgarian industry, challenges have been identified in relation to low trade union density (15%) and the existence of entire branches without trade union representation. The low trade union density and the lack of trade unions in a number of sectors, as an obstacle to collective bargaining at all levels, are posed as a problem not only by trade unions but also by some employers' organisations (construction, food industry, textiles and clothing).

According to the legal framework (the Labor Code), the collective bargaining is carried out at two levels: at sectoral/branch level and at enterprise level. Some trends in the development of the sectoral/branch collective bargaining in the manufacturing sector stand out:

1) sustainability, but limited to several branches and sectors;

2) continuously low overall coverage.

In 2020, three sectoral and three branch CLAs have been concluded. There are no branch and sectoral CLAs in the light, chemical and food industries. The trend of reduction of the sectoral/branch CLAs increased especially after 2016. The rate of decrease in recent years has been controlled, but sectoral collective bargaining coverage remains relatively low for the Bulgarian industry as a whole where 7.5% of employees (for processing industry, 4.5%) are covered by sectoral/branch CLAs. The largest share of collective bargaining is the

relative share of employees covered by sectoral CLA in the mining industry (68%) and beer production, where the coverage of the branch CLA is complete (100%). The clauses in the sectoral/branch CLAs are maintained and with each renewal of CLAs they are steadily upgraded and enriched with new clauses, including those related to the new challenges: Industry 4.0, the Green Pact and Covid-19.

Data from the NCTC shows that the number of collective agreements at the enterprise level has also been declining over the last ten years, but this downward trend has slowed over the last two years and the number and scope of CLAs remains relatively constant. In 2012 there were only 258 enterprise-level CLAs, applied to 127,384 employees. At of the end of 2019, there were 214 CLAs that applies to 119,374 employees or 16.9% of the employed people (of which 124 CLAs in the processing industry, compared to 154 CLAs in 2012), The collective bargaining coverage at the enterprise level in the mining industry is 64.8% of the employed people, in the processing industry is 13.6% and in construction is 3.8%.

Main priorities and issues at stake

New forms of employment. In recent years, there has been a recurrent increase in the share of atypical forms of employment, flexible, part-time, due to digitalisation and the introduction of internet technologies in everyday life. Standard forms of employment are increasingly losing ground (Stern and

Kravitz, 2016). This potentially puts the relationship between labour productivity and wages in a different environment from the one analysed thus far.

The link between wages and labour productivity. Wages are a resultant value, and the Bulgarian worker generates loss of benefits due to the lack of progressive policy on the part of the state regarding issues related to Industry 4.0. Unfortunately, businesses quiet often limit their thinking to quantitative measurement of labour productivity, putting it within the limits of some indicators (for Bulgaria this indicator is the Gross Value Added per employee), without taking into account all the non-monetary benefits that the labour factor brings to an organisation. Moreover, labor productivity in the manufacturing sector has decreased over the years, but the positive correlation with wage dynamics remains. However, the reduced productivity is largely due to the lack of reinvestment and the introduction of new technologies from businesses, and not so much due to labour. This creates not only digital inequalities, but also a loss of competitiveness compared to other countries in the region.

Unsatisfactory responses by the state. Almost 80% (IMF, 2018) of people in developed economies want their government to do more to protect the social and economic security of their country, which shows that their assessment is rather negative for the economic policy pursued by specific governments regarding digitalisation. In the conditions of automation, it is important for people to feel supported by their country.

4.
APPROACHES AND PRACTICES OF NATIONAL TRADE UNIONS FOR DIGITALISATION IN THE MANUFACTURING SECTOR

General approaches and practices of national trade unions

On the basis of the interviews carried out with representatives of seven federations affiliated with CITUB (Construction and Building, Food, Chemistry, Agriculture, Light Industry, Metallurgy and Energy) the following trends, approaches and practices can be outlined:

Vision and attitude. The innovations in the construction sector in Bulgaria in general are faced with a huge number of barrier factors including administrative, financial and those of other natures. In addition, there is no methodological apparatus for gathering information for the development of innovation strategy and policy, which can be borrowed from the example of the more developed countries in this aspect.

The respondents from the Metallurgy and Energy Federations underline the need to improve the skills of the working people in Bulgaria. According to the chairperson of the Federation of Chemistry a big challenge is the demographic problem which, both directly and indirectly, affects the development of the chemical industry and this applies to both the general need and the quality of the workforce.

The chemical industry is losing its attractiveness to young people, partially due to low wages in some industries. The current and future development of the chemical sector will require increasingly high professional and interdisciplinary training of engineering and executive workers and specialists. The industrial development of the chemical sector will be severely tested and deprived of motivation in pursuit of sustainable growth without a partnership between businesses and the scientific and research community.

According to the representative of the Agriculture Federation, the innovations in agriculture are extremely broad: the use of ground sensors, satellite imagery, GPS in agricultural machinery, hail protection, precision farming, drip irrigation, organic farming, soil fertility control, pest protection, food technology (lyophilisation and space farming), etc. Many Bulgarian universities and institutes (Bulgarian Academy of Science, Sofia University, Agricultural University of Plovdiv and University of Ruse) have been working purposefully for years in the direction of precision agriculture, within the Pan-European Network of Digital Information Hub, and

in the country, AgroHub.BG, which is part of Smart AgriHubs (a European project under Horizon 2020).

Communication and awareness-raising campaigns. The Federation of agriculture has drawn a strategy for fair digitalisation based on 5 pillars:

- Digitalisation is changing our world
- It is important to be an active part of this change!
- Young people are digital - adults are not so much
- Change in the number and quality of jobs and skills
- Automation and digitalisation are a prerequisite for better working conditions and better safety for workers.

This strategy is aimed at addressing the challenges in the sector, i.e.: change of jobs; reorganisation of production; "recycling" of workplaces; the introduction of new jobs; temporary and seasonal workers; new working conditions (new skills; training and qualification); how to articulate the benefits of digitalisation to all basic players.

Social dialogue and collective bargaining. One of the good approaches in the chemical industry is the development and adoption of the Memorandum of Social Cooperation and Partnership at sectoral level. This Memorandum is concluded between the National Federation of Labor "Chemistry and Industry" (CITUB) and the Bulgarian Chamber of Chemical Industry, in the framework of the project "Social dialogue and collective bargaining in the chemical sector to

improve the adaptability of employees", with the aim to promote joint action of social partners in the development and introduction of new practices and tools for adaptation of the employees in the enterprises in selected spheres of action, as well as in the extension of the scope of good social dialogue practices. For further information, check here.

Another good example in this field is the joint analysis of branch social partners on the topic of digitalisation and Industry 4.0 in the light industry sector. Concrete solutions, future joint activities, and new policies have been agreed including. e.g. a system for stimulating initiative and innovation with proposals from employees; regulation of vocational training and qualification during the entire internship during working hours; development of a joint concept for lifelong learning, qualification and retraining, professional, digital skills and digital technologies and the challenges of Industry 4.0, and adaptability of employees in the industry; a common concept for the industrialisation of the light industry sector, involving all social partners; a series of interactions and activities related to digitalisation, the circular economy and the green deal.

Multi-stakeholder programmes. CITUB initiated an operation under the operational program "Human Resources Development", which aims to develop profiles for the digital skills of 450 professions in 90 economic sectors. These profiles will be piloted through joint activities of the nationally representative social partners. After establishing the level of currently available skills, curricula and materials

will be prepared for the development of specialised digital skills to the level necessary to exercise the respective profession. These programs will become the basis for courses offered by vocational training centres licensed by NAVET. Each year, the social partners in the framework of the National Action Plan for Employment, implements projects to improve the quality and adaptability of the workforce, and for appropriate professions and specialties including training in the key competence "digital skills".

CONCLUSIVE REMARKS

In view of all the above, the following recommendations can be addressed to Bulgaria regarding the development of technological transformation processes:

1) Actions must be taken to expand the statistical database with data on the labour market and the variables that influence it in the conditions of the digital economy. This will make it easier to take a correct and reasoned position on many issues to which there is currently no definitive answer.

2) A national AI strategy should be developed and adopted in the context of the White Paper on Artificial Intelligence of the EC or artificial intelligence to be an essential part of the National Development Strategy "Bulgaria 2030". At the end of June 2020, a preliminary vision of the Strategy for the Development of Artificial Intelligence in Bulgaria until 2030 was published - Artificial Intelligence for Smart Growth, set as a priority in Vision, goals and priorities for the National Development Program: Bulgaria 2030.

3) The social partners and civil society should be acknowledged as leading actors in the digital transformation process and conductors of measures for the digitalisation of enterprises, as they have much more flexible mechanisms for influencing the real environment through collective bargaining.

4) The messages of the tripartite summit held on June 23, 2020 on the contribution of the social partners to the successful development of the process of Europe's reconstruction after the COVID-19 pandemic, must be taken into account. At the meeting, the European social partners expressed their conviction that in the coming years all efforts should be made to ensure that the funding provided by the NextGenerationEU recovery instrument, is spent properly by stimulating the necessary structural reforms and providing investments for more prosperity and job creation.

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