

The role of social partners (SP) in the European Semester (ES)

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Outline

1 Objectives, background, scope of the study

2 Time span, sources, content of SP involvement

3 SP involvement in NRPs, perception of the ES

4 Conclusions and policy pointers

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Objectives, background, scope

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Objectives

- map, analyse and assess the role of the SP in the ES with a focus on employment and social policy
- Annual Growth Survey (AGS)
- National Reform Programmes (NRPs)
- Country-Specific Recommendations (CSRs)
- overview report on the involvement of SP
- at EU level
- at national level

Background

- role of national SP is not prescribed in the European economic governance (six-pack)
- SP are seen as key agents in the ES
- involvement = any form of contacts between the national authorities or the EC and the national SP irrespective of the degree of institutionalisation with the aim to participate in the elaboration of the key documents of the ES, even if the positions of the SP are not taken into consideration
- time span covered: 2011-2014

Scope

- **issues covered**

- specific forms of national SPs' involvement (tripartite standing committee/ad-hoc committee, etc.) and the sources / contents of these rights
- factors related to the degree of institutionalisation + degree of impact
- information on the SP perception of the ES procedure and content

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Time span, sources, content of SP involvement

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room/time for involvement

no involvement possible



before: before the approval/publication/adoption (i.e. during the preparation)

after: once a document has been approved, adopted, submitted, etc...

	November/ December		January	February	March	April	May	June		July	
Lead Institution	EC				MS		EC		MS	Council	MS
Key Document	AGS		Country reports		NRP		CSR proposals			CSRs	
SP participation	Before/ during	A f t e r	Before	After	Before	After	During discussions				
Elaboration											
Information											
Consultation											

Sources and content of SP involvement

- in 23 MS there are no specific provisions re involvement of the SP
- in most cases previously established social dialogue (SD) structures (e.g. social and economic committees) are used
- SD related to the ES is more limited, less important and less formal and regular
- 6 MS established formal structures
 - BG, DK, FR, PL, SE and FI

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SP involvement in NRPs, perception of the ES

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National Reform Programmes

- in 22 MS national SP were involved
- AT, BE, BG, CZ, DE, DK, EE, FI, IT, LT, LV, MT, NL, PL, SE, SI, SK, UK
- CY, ES, FR, LU (definition)
- in 3 MS (HR, HU, RO) the SP did not play a role neither in the definition nor the implementation of NRPs
- EL, IE and PT (Macroeconomic Adjustment Programmes replaced the NRPs)

NRP: specific forms of involvement

tripartite meetings			other forms of involvement	
<i>standard tripartite body</i>	<i>specific European committee</i>	<i>tripartite ad-hoc committees/ meetings</i>	<i>separate meetings with TU/EO</i>	<i>only written consultation</i>
CZ, LU, MT, NL, SI, SK	BG, DK, FI, FR, PL, SE	AT, BE, CY, ES (since 2014), IT, LV, UK	DE, EE, IT, LU	ES (> 2014), LT

NRP: degree of institutionalisation

1. Frequency of consultation		2. Time allotted to I&C (SP perception) and number of meetings				3. Balance of consultation	
regular and predictable	irregular/ad-hoc	enough time for I&C	insufficient time for I&C	only one meeting	more than one meeting	consultation on an equal footing	unbalanced consultation
AT, BE, BG, DE, DK, EE, FR, LT, LV, MT, NL, PL, SE (since 2013), SI and SK	CY, CZ, ES, FI, IT, LU, UK	AT, BE, CY, CZ, DE (EO), DK, EE, FI, LT, MT, NL, PL SE, SK, UK	BG, DE (TU) ES, FR, IT, LU, LV, SI,	BG, DE, ES, FI, FR, LU, LV, MT, NL, SI, UK	AT, BE, CY, CZ, DK, EE, IT, LT, PL, SE, SK	AT, BE, CZ, DE, DK, EE, ES, FI, FR, IT, LT, LU, LV, MT, NL, PL, SE, SI, SK, UK	BG, CY,

NRP: degree of institutionalisation

**MS high degree
institutionalisation**

**AT, BE, DK, EE, LT, MT,
NL, PL, SE , SK**

**MS with mid degree
institutionalisation**

CZ, DE, FI, FR, LV, SI, UK

**MS with low degree
institutionalisation**

BG, CY, ES, IT, LU

NRP: degree of the impact

Influence on NRP design			views of SP annexed	
<i>significant</i>	<i>limited</i>	<i>no influence</i>	<i>yes</i>	<i>no</i>
BE, FI, NL, MT, SE	AT, CY (EO), CZ, DE (EO), EE, ES* (EO), FR, IT, LT, LV, LU*, SI*, PL	BG, CY(TU), DE (TU), DK, ES (TU), UK	AT, ES (only from EO in 2015), PL, SE	AT, BE, BG, CY, CZ, DE, DK, EE, FI, FR, IT, LT, LU, LV, MT, NL, PL, SI, SK, UK

NRP: degree of institutionalisation and impact

	degree of impact			
		significant	limited	not relevant
degree of institutionalisation	high	BE, NL, MT, SE	AT, EE, LT, PL	DK
	medium	FI	CZ, DE (EO) FR, SI,	DE (TU), UK
	low		CY (EO), ES (EO), IT, LU	BG, CY (TU), ES (TU)

National SP perception and assessment

- assessment of the content, relevance and coherence of the Integrated Guidelines (IGs) and of the CSRs
- **trade unions**
- criticise the content of the ES, especially the unbalanced agenda, focusing on promoting austerity, and less on other social goals of the Europe 2020 Strategy (e.g. reducing poverty or promoting social cohesion)
- **employer organisations**
- tend to agree with the content of the IGs and the CSR
- value positively those CSRs aiming at increasing competitiveness and economic growth

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Conclusions and policy pointers

Conclusions

- in most MS the involvement of the SP is mainly carried out within already established SD structures
- 6 MS (BG, DK, FR, FI, PL, SE) have specific structures
- in most MS the SP were involved in the NRPs
- in HR, HU and RO > SP were not involved
- significant differences between MS in the degree of SP involvement
- quality of procedures is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for the SP to influence the content of the NRPs

Conclusions

- EC has established some contacts to discuss past CSRs or debate issues related to the ES in 12 MS:
 - AT, BE, CZ, DE, DK, EE, FI, FR, LV, MT, SE, SI
- governments involve the SP in the definition/implementation of CSRs in only 10 MS
 - BE, BG, CZ, FI, FR, LU, MT, SE and SI
- stronger support for the content of the ES by employers than by trade unions

Policy pointers

- despite recent progress there is room for improvement of the SP involvement both in the European and the national strand of the ES;
- MS that do not have ES structures could consider creating them to enhance their involvement;
- national authorities should consider improving the level of institutionalisation (regularity, time allocated, degree of balance) of SP involvement in the NRPs;
- national authorities could involve the SPs in the NRPs in a more effective and transparent way with a view to increasing their impact on the content.

Policy pointers

- EC should encourage a more timely process in order to provide better and more accurate information to the SPs on the content of the CSRs;
- EC and the national authorities could consider involving the SPs more in the implementation of the CSRs;
- they could also monitor closely whether suggestions to implement certain recommendations in 'consultation with the social partners' were followed and report the results in the next country reports;
- EC could strengthen the role and highlight the visibility of the European Semester Officers;
- EC could support the capacity-building of SP;
- further research could analyse the factors promoting effective SD in the context of the ES.

Further information

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<http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/publications/report/2016/industrial-relations/role-of-the-social-partners-in-the-european-semester>



Role of **social** **partners** European **Semester**