

Industrial relations and social dialogue
**Involvement of social partners
in the implementation of national
recovery and resilience plans**



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Authors: Ricardo Rodríguez Contreras (Eurofound) and Pablo Sanz (Notus)

Research manager: Ricardo Rodríguez Contreras

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European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions

Telephone: (+353 1) 204 31 00

Email: information@eurofound.europa.eu

Web: www.eurofound.europa.eu

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Abbreviations

CSR	country-specific recommendation
EESC	European Economic and Social Committee
NRP	national reform programme
RRF	Recovery and Resilience Facility
RRP	recovery and resilience plan
SMEs	small and medium-sized enterprises

Note: See Annex 1 for full names of the social partner organisations and national authorities interviewed for this report.

Executive summary

Introduction

After temporary adjustments in 2020 and 2021, the European Semester cycle returned to its pre-pandemic format in 2022, although now fully updated to take into account the implementation of the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF), ensuring complementarity and avoiding overlaps. The RRF is the blueprint for an ambitious investment and reform agenda, aiming to boost growth and have a stabilising effect by maintaining investment levels in Member States in a context of rising prices and economic uncertainty. The RRF's unique nature, as a demand-driven and performance-based instrument, is a key component of the EU's future-oriented strategy, and is destined to make a significant contribution to the European Green Deal, the EU's long-term growth plan to make Europe climate neutral by 2050.

Policy context

Over a year and a half after the adoption of the RRF, implementation of the recovery and resilience plans (RRPs) is progressing satisfactorily, according to the European Commission's July 2022 assessment. The need for social partners and other stakeholders to be involved in the preparation and implementation of the RRPs is established in the RRF Regulation, which requires that the RRPs set out 'a summary of the consultation process ... for the preparation and, where available, the implementation of the plan and how the inputs of the stakeholders are reflected in the plan'. This requirement was underscored in the EU's Annual Sustainable Growth Survey, which launched the 2022 cycle of the European Semester.

Key messages

- The findings of the present study indicate some degree of discontent with the overall quality of the social partners' involvement in implementing the RRPs and drawing up the national reform programmes (NRPs) in the 2022 cycle. The results show that involvement is uneven and, in many Member States, rather weak, as reported by the social partners in particular.
- According to the information received, the involvement of the social partners was more prominent during the design of the main components of the RRPs, which mainly took place in 2021, than during the implementation phase. This is probably a result of the different dynamics governing the preparation and multiannual implementation of the RRPs, since the timing for the development of the measures and their implementation may require a longer scale, involving additional players and management levels.
- Social partners in many Member States still complain that involvement tends to be a rather formal and somewhat superficial process, with social partners unable to provide effective input. Trade unions are particularly critical of their role in the execution of investments, which has been rather limited so far. Employer organisations are more positive about their involvement in the implementation of investment initiatives set out in the RRPs, including measures addressing small and medium-sized enterprises (such as digitalisation policies). However, as a rule, the assessments of both social partners are similar in terms of the implementation of the RRPs and preparation of the 2022 NRPs.
- With a few exceptions, the social partners pointed to the following unfavourable factors:
 - The time allotted to social partner involvement in drawing up the NRP or implementing the various measures included in the RRP was insufficient.
 - A genuine process of consultation and discussion was lacking in some Member States, despite the fact that several Member States have established new bodies to involve the social partners in RRP implementation.
 - National authorities tended not to reflect adequately trade unions' and employer organisations' views and proposals in the NRP.
 - While social partner involvement through tripartite social dialogue institutions can provide more opportunities for meaningful contributions, participation in these bodies was mainly limited to information exchange.
- The overall findings are nuanced and should be considered in the context of national social dialogue practices, as social partners' assessments may be influenced by various issues.
 - Member States' differing speeds in relation to the implementation of reforms and investments have led to data that are not easily comparable. This uneven progress must be considered when analysing social partners' assessments of their involvement, as some Member States are already forging ahead, whereas others are in the early stages of implementation.
 - There is a consensus among social partners in some Member States (for example, Belgium, Cyprus and Poland) that it is still too early to assess social partners' involvement in the implementation of measures because the implementation process is still in the early stages. As a result, some reforms and investments have not yet started (and no consultation has taken place).

- The complexity and diversity of the measures in the RRFs (and insufficient time allotted to consultation) are other factors identified by social partners – and national authorities, in some cases – as limiting the quality of their involvement.
- The minor financial impact of the RRF in some Member States (for example, Luxembourg and some Nordic countries) may be reflected in social partners' low level of interest in being involved in some policy actions, reforms and investments.
- National disputes or diverging views on social dialogue may have affected the responses provided in some countries: when tripartite labour relations are tense, the shadow cast by these disputes may influence views on social partners' involvement in the discussions on the RRFs and NRPs.
- The mismatch between expectations about and the actual level of participation of the social partners in the implementation of the RRFs or the preparation of the NRPs is still an issue. There are differences in vision (and ambition) between public authorities and social partners.
- The quality and intensity of the involvement confirms once more that in countries with well-established social dialogue frameworks the implementation of reforms involves regular engagement with social partners.

Policy pointers

- Implementing the RRF, including REPowerEU, will remain at the centre of the EU's macroeconomic policy, aimed at ensuring a smooth twin transition. Therefore, the implementation of the various reforms and investments included in the RRFs will require an effective new dynamic to involve social partners flexibly and effectively in consultation on all measures in those Member States where social dialogue has been reported to be uneven and underdeveloped.
- Care should be taken to ensure that gaps and fragmentation between different government departments' activities and different levels of government do not prevent the effective involvement of social partners in the implementation of the RRFs. Equally, Member States should make efforts to improve how the involvement of social partners is reported in the NRPs, by indicating which measures are supported by social partners or providing further details on consultation procedures.
- The involvement of social partners in policymaking and particularly in the implementation of the RRFs is an indicator of the quality of social dialogue. As seen during the COVID-19 crisis, good-quality social dialogue pays off in turbulent times when stability is needed to face ongoing economic uncertainty; it certainly played a major role in managing the crisis and mitigating its negative economic and social effects.

Introduction

European Semester 2022

After temporary adjustments in 2020 and 2021, the European Semester cycle returned to its pre-pandemic format in 2022, although now fully updated to take into account the implementation of the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF) to ensure complementarity between the two processes and avoid overlaps. The country reports and country-specific recommendations (CSRs) on structural economic policies, among other key policy documents, were reintroduced.

The RRF is the main building block of the NextGenerationEU stimulus package ending in 2026. RRF funds should not be used to replace recurring national budgetary expenditure, unless this can be duly justified. Rather, the RRF sets out an ambitious investment and reform agenda, aiming to boost growth and have a stabilising effect by maintaining investment levels in Member States in a context of rising price and economic uncertainty. The RRF's unique nature, as a demand-driven and performance-based instrument, has become a key component of the EU's future-oriented strategy, and it should make a significant contribution to the European Green Deal, the EU's long-term growth plan to make Europe climate neutral by 2050.¹

Given that the European Semester is by nature an instrument of macroeconomic policy coordination, the 2022 Semester cycle was also strongly affected by Russia's aggression against Ukraine and subsequent developments, notably the high rises in commodity and energy prices, with far-reaching effects across Member States.

The 2022 cycle began with the European Commission's European Semester autumn package in November 2021 and the Annual Sustainable Growth Survey and continued in March 2022 with the adoption of the Commission's guidance on fiscal policy for 2023, ahead of the Member States' submission of their 2022 stability and convergence programmes. In May 2022, the European Semester spring package published by the Commission included country reports (published later than the equivalent reports in 2020); proposals for CSRs; and other fiscal and financial reports, reviews and guidance concerning the Member States' compliance with the deficit and debt criteria (for example, the reviews forming part of the Macroeconomic Imbalance Procedure).

In the 2022 cycle, the national reform programmes (NRPs) that must be submitted as part of the European Semester process played a dual role, as they also fulfilled one of the two yearly reporting requirements for Member States under the RRF Regulation. Article 27 of the regulation requires that Member States report twice a year, in the context of the European Semester, on their progress

towards achieving their recovery and resilience plans (RRPs).

The country reports provide an overview of the economic and social developments and challenges facing each Member State and a forward-looking analysis of their resilience. These overviews also include an assessment of the country's progress regarding the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights. Overall, the country reports in 2022 were more focused than in previous years, with annexes related to thematic scoreboards and the analysis highlighting the interaction with the implementation of the RRF. The Council of the European Union formally adopted the CSRs, prepared by the Economic Policy Committee and the Economic and Financial Committee, on 17 June 2022. The CSRs address the key issues identified in the country reports on which policy action is required and that were not already addressed by the RRF of the Member State concerned. The Council's 'comply or explain' note shows that the changes introduced by the Council in relation to the Commission's recommendations for CSRs were limited, mostly reflecting caution about the financing of the REPowerEU plan, which had not yet been adopted by the co-legislators at that time (Council of the European Union, 2022a).

Recovery and resilience plans in 2022

Over a year and a half after the adoption of the RRF, the implementation of the RRPs is progressing satisfactorily. According to the European Commission's report on RRF implementation in July 2022, 'the implementation of the Recovery and Resilience Plans is producing tangible results on the ground, both for investments and reforms, across the six pillars covered by the Facility' (European Commission, 2022a). The work of the European Commission and the Member States on the RRF procedures (such as pre-financing agreements, operational arrangements, disbursements and payments) is well on track, with efficient preparatory exchanges and early dialogue between the Commission and the Member States.

At the time of writing, all 27 Member State RRPs had been endorsed by the European Commission, with only Hungary's plan still pending endorsement by the Council. Interestingly, while Member States have generally requested the full amount of grants available to them, only a few Member States have requested loans, which leaves a considerable amount available should Member States require loans at a later stage. Member States can still submit a loan request until August 2023, even after the submission and approval of their initial RRF. The request for loan support must be accompanied by a revised recovery and resilience plan, including additional

¹ This overall target is enshrined in the European Climate Law, which includes a legally binding commitment to reduce net greenhouse gas emissions by at least 55% by 2030, compared with the level in 1990.

milestones and targets. The Commission's report makes clear that the reforms and investments included in the RRP should contribute to addressing the challenges and gaps identified in the CSRs addressed to the Member States, if warranted.

To foster transparency and effective monitoring, the Commission launched the Recovery and Resilience Scoreboard, a continually updated online tool that provides basic information for citizens and gives an overview of how the implementation of the RRF and the national RRP is progressing.²

REPowerEU package

The war in Ukraine has highlighted the EU's dependency on imported fossil fuels, and has resulted in escalating energy and food prices, with the subsequent rocketing inflation rate slowing the pace of RRP implementation and increasing the estimated costs of Member States' RRP.

In response to the growing challenges caused by the energy crisis, in May 2022 the Commission proposed the REPowerEU plan, with the RRF as one of the main tools for its delivery. The REPowerEU plan is intended to transform Europe's energy system and has two aims: to contribute to phasing out the EU's dependence on Russian fossil fuels and to increase the EU's resilience and speed up the transition to clean energy. To be implemented alongside the Fit for 55 package and the hydrogen and gas package, REPowerEU is a plan for saving energy, producing clean energy, diversifying European energy supplies and accelerating the roll-out of renewable energy to replace fossil fuels in homes, industry, transport and power generation (European Commission, 2022b). It puts forward an additional set of actions, modifying the RRF Regulation and other legislative acts. It does not replace but rather amends and adds to the options available in the RRF Regulation.

The European Commission proposed that Member States should add a REPowerEU chapter to their RRP to channel investments into REPowerEU priorities, and that they should put forward reforms focusing on measures contributing to the plan's objectives. The chapter should also consider initiatives addressing, for example, the requalification of the workforce to increase green skills and support for the value chains of key materials and technologies linked to the green transition. A guidance note on the RRP in the context of REPowerEU was published on 18 May 2022, providing information and instructions to help Member States modify their plans (European Commission, 2022c).

The Council has agreed its position on the Commission's REPowerEU proposal (Council of the European Union, 2022b). Among other financial considerations, the Council limits the obligation for Member States to submit the REPowerEU chapter to only those cases where they wish to request additional RRP funding in the form of RRF loans, non-repayable support from new revenue or

newly transferred resources from shared management programmes. The Council also clarified that Member States will be able to request loan support until 31 August 2023.

Since the REPowerEU plan modifies the RRF Regulation and encourages Member States to submit updated versions of their RRP including the new chapter, it will have a direct impact on the options and timeline for modification of the national RRP and will require further consultation with the social partners involved on new measures proposed. Additionally, it is likely to have an impact on the Commission's update on the maximum financial contribution published by the Commission on 30 June 2022 and will also have to be reflected in the modified RRP.

About this report

Since 2016, Eurofound has been monitoring the involvement of national social partners in the European Semester and has produced a series of annual reports on the results of this exercise (see, for example, Eurofound, 2020, 2021, 2022).

The guidelines on EU Member States' employment policies (the 'Employment Guidelines') and the European Pillar of Social Rights acknowledge the need for the involvement and consultation of social partners in the 'design and implementation of economic, employment and social policies according to national practices' (principle 8 of the European Pillar of Social Rights).

Member States have been implementing the national RRP for more than a year, and relevant RRF funding has already been disbursed during this period. Therefore, the present report reviews the quality of the social partners' involvement in the ongoing implementation of reforms and investments – mainly focused on the twin transition – included in the RRP. The social partners' engagement in the structural reforms needed is even more critical now owing to rising energy and commodity prices, high levels of inflation and the risk of lower growth.

This report is a continuation of previous Eurofound studies on the involvement of the social partners in the European Semester, particularly the report *Involvement of social partners in the national recovery and resilience plans* (2022), which concluded that the quality and intensity of the social partners' involvement was uneven and rather weak in a relatively large number of countries.

The report focuses on tripartite social dialogue, in whatever form it takes at national level. As has been reported many times, there is a wide variety of national types of and mechanisms for consultation and participation of social partners in policymaking. In this regard, the findings constitute an indicator of the quality of tripartite social dialogue at national level.

The study covers all EU Member States except the Netherlands (see Box 1).

² For more information, see https://ec.europa.eu/economy_finance/recovery-and-resilience-scoreboard/

Box 1: Late submission of the RRP – the Netherlands

The Netherlands submitted its RRP, along with its NRP, on 8 July 2022 – after the period covered by this study. Exploratory views provided by the social partners indicate that they do not consider their contribution to the RRP to have been meaningful, given that all the policy measures, such as pension system reform and tackling false self-employment, had already been designed before their inclusion in the RRP. The Dutch government argues that, although none of the measures are new, they had been discussed with the social partners at an earlier stage, with social partners mainly providing input in the framework of the coalition agreements after the 2021 parliamentary elections and in regular tripartite meetings.

With regard to the 2022 NRP, national authorities argue that input on social policy came from the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment and that all the measures suggested by the authorities were agreed at an earlier stage in tripartite dialogue. This is also reflected in the RRP:

The SER [tripartite body] has issued a medium-term opinion (June 2021) to the Dutch government, including the chapter 'Labour market, income distribution and equal opportunities'. As the coalition agreement indicates, this chapter and the report of the Commission for Regulation of Work (January 2020) form the guideline for the labour market plans. In preparation of the 'outline labour market letter', intensive consultations were held with social partners. In developing and implementing the plans, the government will make every effort to realise the plans in the outline letter as quickly and carefully as possible.

Respondents from the Ministry of Finance (responsible for the RRP and NRP) state that the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment provides the input for the NRP and the respondents make sure that the input is acceptable to social partners. This means that the measures were negotiated with the social partners at an earlier stage. However, the social partners argue that they were not consulted explicitly on the NRP.

The European Commission gave a positive assessment of the Netherlands' RRP (European Commission, 2022d).

Methodology and analysis

The findings of this report are based on information collected by the Network of Eurofound Correspondents on the views of social partners and government representatives in the Member States. Most of the views gathered were those of national peak-level organisations, such as confederations.

Previous Eurofound studies were based on a standardised questionnaire for all the EU countries. In this study, two standardised questionnaires were used to gather social partners' and government representatives' views on their involvement in the 2022 NRPs and the implementation of the RRP.

The **first questionnaire** covered 11 countries where, according to previous Eurofound studies, social dialogue frameworks, institutions and practices show certain shortcomings to various degrees. These countries are Bulgaria, Croatia, Estonia, Greece, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia. In this questionnaire, social partners and government representatives were asked to provide their views on the quality of their involvement in the 2022 NRPs and the implementation of the RRP during 2022. They were also asked for their views on the extent to which there had been changes in the features of the institutional framework for the social partners' involvement in the context of the European Semester. In addition, the social partners contacted were asked to discuss their involvement in a maximum of six relevant employment, social and economic policy measures included in the RRP aiming to foster the digital transition and productivity,

fairness and environmental sustainability. A total of 75 policy measures (reforms and investments) were selected to assess the quality of the involvement of the social partners in policymaking.

A **second questionnaire** covered the remaining 15 EU countries (the Netherlands being excluded from the study), where the involvement of social partners in overall policymaking and in the context of the European Semester is more flexible and meaningful. This questionnaire replicates the questions from the first questionnaire on the quality of the involvement of the social partners and government representatives in the 2022 NRPs and the implementation of the RRP during 2022. However, it does not gather information on the institutional framework and social partners' involvement in relevant employment, social and economic policy measures.

This report uses the working definition of 'involvement' applied in Eurofound's previous reports: for consultation to be viewed as involvement, it should be genuine, timely and meaningful. The analysis of involvement in the NRPs and in the implementation of the RRP was based on the social partners' assessments using quality standards previously defined by Eurofound. Therefore, there exists a normative framework designed to assess the quality of involvement, which allows for the production of evidence-based results.

The data and information collection undertaken for this report took place from May to June 2022. A total of 182 responses were gathered, offering an overall picture of the degree of involvement of social partners. These responses came from the following types of stakeholders:

- 69 from trade union representatives
- 57 from employer organisation representatives
- 48 from government representatives
- 8 from European Semester Officers and other experts

As a rule, the analysis gives greatest weight to views that employer organisations and trade unions share, and the assessments made by all stakeholders interviewed (including employer organisations, trade unions and national authorities) are deemed worthy of attention. The results of this triangular exercise are shown in the various tables in the report using the labels ‘Employer organisations and trade unions agree’ (with the assessment) and ‘Overall agreement among all parties’ (employer organisations, trade unions and national authorities all agree with the assessment). Diverging views between employer organisations and trade unions are noted when they represent strongly opposed views. In any case, caution is required when interpreting the results, as they are based on the subjective views of individual respondents, provided on behalf of one organisation each.

Structure of the report

This report comprises four chapters following this introduction.

- Chapter 1 analyses the quality of the involvement based on the methodology applied. This chapter covers all EU countries except the Netherlands.
- Chapter 2 analyses the main changes in the institutional governance frameworks for involving social partners in the implementation of the RRP and the preparation of the 2022 NRPs. This chapter focuses exclusively on those 11 countries where, according to previous Eurofound studies, social dialogue frameworks, institutions and practices show certain shortcomings to various degrees.
- Chapter 3 describes the degree of satisfaction of the social partners with their involvement as regards some specific measures grouped into broad policy categories, again focusing on the 11 countries that were analysed in depth.
- Chapter 4 discusses the key findings of the analysis and presents policy pointers based on them.

1 Quality of involvement of the social partners

Institutional basis and assessments

This report analyses the quality of the involvement of national social partners in the ongoing implementation³ of the RRP and in the preparation of the 2022 NRP. The time frames for these are different: involvement in the RRP is generally a long-term process based on the implementation of the various policy measures included in the plans, while social partners' participation in the NRP is more focused and usually takes place over a short period – during the months or weeks immediately before the submission of the NRP to the European Commission. This difference in time frame influences the way in which the involvement takes place and how the social dialogue frameworks are established.

The need for social partners and other stakeholders to be involved in the preparation and implementation of the RRP is established in Article 18(4)(q) of the RRF Regulation of 12 February 2021, which stipulates that the RRP should set out

*a summary of the consultation process, conducted in accordance with the national legal framework, of local and regional authorities, **social partners**, civil society organisations, and other relevant stakeholders, for the **preparation and, where available, the implementation of the plan and how the inputs of the stakeholders are reflected in the plan.***

This provision was developed by the Commission in the document *Guidance to Member States: Recovery and resilience plans – Part 2*, in Part 3, 'Complementarity and implementation of the plan', Section 5, 'Consultation process':

*Member States should also provide a summary of the **consultation process** of local and regional authorities, **social partners**, civil society organisations, youth organisations, and other relevant stakeholders, as implemented in accordance with the national legal framework, for the preparation and, where available, the implementation of the plan. The summary should cover the **scope, type, and timing of consultation activities, as well as how the views of the stakeholders are reflected in the plan.***

(European Commission, 2021a)

In addition, the Annual Sustainable Growth Survey, which launched the 2022 cycle, stated that:

*The systematic involvement of **social partners** and other relevant stakeholders is key for the success of the economic and employment policy coordination and implementation. Their timely and meaningful involvement is key at all steps of the Semester cycle. ...*

*For the **implementation of the recovery and resilience plans**, it is important that Member States engage actively with social partners and other stakeholders through **dedicated regular meetings**. These exchanges will also be an opportunity to engage on the broader economic, employment and social policy coordination agenda and will help to commonly identify challenges, improve policy solutions and contribute to a successful implementation of the European Semester and the Recovery and Resilience Facility.*

(European Commission, 2021b)

Therefore, when submitting the RRP and NRP, Member States should describe the consultation and/or contributions of social partners during the preparation and implementation of these key policy documents. In addition, social partners should be involved in the implementation of RRP through regular meetings.

According to the Commission's 2022 report on the implementation of the RRF:

The success of the RRF also depends on the close involvement of social partners, civil society organisations, local and regional authorities, NGOs and other stakeholders, who have contributed to the design of the plans and are now playing a key role in their implementation.

(European Commission, 2022a)

Regarding the social partners' involvement in the European Semester, attention must be drawn to the 2022 resolution of the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC): *Involvement of organised civil society in the national recovery and resilience plans – How can we improve it?* (EESC, 2022). Through this resolution, the EESC assessed whether Member States have addressed the shortcomings identified with regard to the involvement of social partners and civil society organisations in the preparation of the RRP and how their participation in the implementation of the plans is developing.

To this end, the EESC's European Semester Group collected views through a questionnaire sent to the members of the group. The questionnaire includes 21 questions on social partners' and civil society organisations' involvement regarding the content and the implementation of national RRP, and the impact of the green and digital transitions on the economies and societies of Member States. The questionnaire was open for responses between October 2021 and April 2022.

Overall, the results show that the involvement of social partners and civil society organisations was assessed as

³ In the context of this study, implementation is understood as participation in any form in the preparation or design of a specific measure or involvement in its practical implementation (as a key player, for example).

insufficient in several countries. The resolution points out that proper participation takes place when, in formal consultation processes based on legal rules and public and transparent procedures, civil society organisations or social partners are duly informed in writing, are given sufficient time to analyse the government's proposals and draft their own proposals, and the inclusion or rejection of these proposals is accompanied by a justification in public minutes or documents.

Along the same lines, the European Parliament expressed the view that involvement of the relevant organisations was inadequate in its 2022 *Report on the implementation of the Recovery and Resilience Facility*, in which it made a motion for a resolution:

in all Member States, local and regional authorities, civil society organisations, social partners, academia or other relevant stakeholders were not sufficiently involved, in the design and the implementation of the NRRPs [national recovery and resilience plans], in accordance with the national legal framework, and calls for their involvement based on clear and transparent principles, in the implementation of the NRRPs to the maximum extent possible under the national legislation.

(European Parliament, 2022)

Furthermore, the European Parliament underlines that:

local and regional authorities, civil society organisations, social partners and the other relevant stakeholders are at the forefront of the local implementation of NRRPs and reminds the Commission and the Member States that proper involvement and coordination with local and regional authorities, civil society organisations, social partners and other relevant stakeholders in the implementation and monitoring of the plans is decisive for the success of the recovery in the Union and is essential for the effectiveness and broad ownership of NRRPs; invites the Commission to explore ways to establish a dialogue with representatives at the EU level of the relevant RRF stakeholders.

(European Parliament, 2022)

Box 2 analyses recent research exploring the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on social partners' involvement in social dialogue.

Box 2: COVID-19 and tripartite social dialogue

In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, research on industrial relations has focused in particular on tripartite social dialogue, analysing the extent to which this extraordinary crisis fostered new corporatist responses (Eurofound, 2020, 2021, 2022; Brandl, 2021; Meardi and Tassinari, 2022). Existing research is mainly based on qualitative approaches. Moreover, the results are far from conclusive, as the studies differ in some of their conclusions.

For instance, research conducted by Brandl (2021), based on semi-structured interviews and a standardised questionnaire survey of social partners and state authorities, shows a general trend towards an emerging, more intensive and cooperative tripartite social dialogue. In coordinated market economy countries, several tripartite policy outcomes were identified. This cooperation was based on long-standing tradition. However, research also shows that tripartite initiatives were developed in 'liberal market economic' countries with few traditions or where policies had not been developed in a tripartite manner for decades. The author concludes that cooperation and a focus on mutual interests were positively influenced by external factors related to the COVID-19 pandemic and the need to work together. However, whether the constructive alliances and cooperation will continue once the 'common enemy' is defeated remains to be seen.

The conclusions reached by Brandl (2021) are challenged in a recent article by Meardi and Tassinari (2022). The authors analysed whether social dialogue practices and functions changed during the pandemic in the three largest EU countries (Germany, France and Italy) compared with the situation during the 'crisis corporatism' and 'austerity corporatism' that accompanied the Great Recession of 2007–2009 and the eurozone crisis of 2010–2012. They conclude that the pandemic did not encourage consensus between social partners and state authorities. Rather, it reinforced some of the patterns, modes of interaction and frictions already present in each country.

Eurofound's 2022 study

The conceptual approach to analysing the quality of the social partners' involvement in the RRP and NRP was based on previous Eurofound approaches (Eurofound, 2021). Thus, the quality of the involvement was measured in terms of input or processes (involving the social partners in policymaking) and output (the degree of social partners' influence on the policy content).

This chapter analyses the quality of the involvement in terms of input, which was measured according to four main indicators derived from social partners' and national authorities' assessments:

- the time allotted for consultation
- the degree of consultation, understood as social partners' opportunities to contribute to the development of the RRP and NRP, and to receive a response or feedback from the government

- balance – the extent to which trade unions and employer organisations have been consulted on an equal footing
- transparency and visibility of the social partners' contributions – the extent to which the NRP included a summary of the consultation process, providing details on the scope, type and timing of consultation activities

The quality of input is analysed first with regard to RRP implementation and then in relation to NRP design.

Involvement in the implementation of the recovery and resilience plans

Member States were asked to submit their RRP to the European Commission before 30 April 2021. The RRP of 26 Member States were endorsed by the Commission. Work is ongoing on the operational arrangements between many Member States and the Commission. The signature of

these documents is a prerequisite for the submission of a payment request.

Overall, data from the European Commission's review show positive progress on the implementation of the RRP, although the process is moving at different paces and following different timelines in the Member States. These timing factors must be taken into account when analysing social partners' views on their involvement in the implementation of the plans.

Time allotted for consultation

As it happened during the design of the RRP, views gathered through the questionnaires show that the lack of sufficient time for consultation was an issue in most of the Member States (Table 1). This problem regarding the time for consultation recurs often. In 14 Member States (Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Denmark, Greece, Hungary, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia), both trade unions and employer organisations reported that the time allotted for consultation, or the meetings held for this purpose, was not enough. In **Denmark**, national authorities share this view.

Table 1: Time allotted for consultation in the implementation of the RRP

Parties	Enough time allotted	Not enough time allotted
Employer organisations and trade unions agree		Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece,* Hungary, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia
National authorities	Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Poland, Slovakia	
Overall agreement among all parties	Cyprus,** Czechia, Estonia, Malta,*** Spain, Sweden	Denmark
Diverging views		
Employer organisations	Finland, France (MEDEF, CPME), Greece (SEV), Ireland, Italy	Germany, France (UDES), Latvia
Trade unions	Germany, Latvia	Cyprus (PEO), Finland, France, Ireland, Italy

Notes: Information was not available or was pending confirmation for national authorities in Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Portugal, Romania and Slovenia; and for employer organisations in Malta. *In Greece, at least one trade union and one employer organisation reported that the time devoted to consultation was insufficient. However, one employer organisation (SEV) reported being satisfied. **In Cyprus, at least one trade union and one employer organisation reported that the time devoted to consultation was enough. However, one trade union (PEO) reported being unsatisfied. ***In Malta, information was not available for the employer organisation.

Source: Unless otherwise indicated, all tables in the report were compiled by the authors based on information provided by the Network of Eurofound Correspondents and interviews with national social partners

In **Austria**, social partners reported that only a single (virtual) coordination meeting took place between national authorities and the social partners, at which the atmosphere was described as good, but the discussion substantially unproductive (according to trade unions). In **Belgium**, two meetings were organised between the state secretary, the cabinet, the National Labour Council, the Central Economic Council and the Federal Council for Sustainable Development. In this context, social partners have reported that they could not contribute properly. In **Slovenia**, the surveyed period was marked by the country's pre-election campaign. Additionally, it should

be noted that the bulk of reforms in the RRP related to the work domain of social partners (Component 10: Labour Market) are scheduled to be drafted and adopted in 2023 and 2024. Therefore, the work on these reforms, as well as cooperation with social partners, has yet to begin.

In contrast, in Czechia, Estonia, Spain and Sweden, social partners and public authorities reported having enough time for consultation. In **Sweden**, social partners reported usually being consulted on all the policies that were included in both the RRP and the NRP at some stage. In the case of **Spain**, which was the first country to receive the first RRF payments, the

general and positive assessment of the time allotted for consultation is nuanced and varies across measures (Box 3). **Cyprus** could also be included in this group of Member States because at least one trade union and one

employer organisation reported having enough time for consultation. In addition, in **Malta**, trade unions reported being satisfied with the time allotted, but information was missing from the other side of industry.

Box 3: Differing social partner assessments across policy fields – Spain

Spain was one of the countries to receive the first RRF payments. Its general and positive assessment of the time allotted for consultation is nuanced and varies across measures. Spanish social partners noticed some delays and discontinuities in the periodical meetings, which limited the time for discussing the decisions adopted by the government.

In addition, social partners have criticised the quality of social dialogue in particular policy fields such as active labour market policies. According to employer organisations, social dialogue in this policy field has experienced major erosion over the last year. In 2020, a social dialogue round table was set up, but no agreement has been reached so far.

Similarly, trade unions state that the problem with regard to active labour market policies has been the lack of an adequate setting for developing meaningful involvement. In this regard, they highlighted how the government has left reform of the Youth Guarantee aside and no social dialogue forums have been created to try to find common positions. There have only been informal bilateral meetings with some exchange of information but no meaningful discussion of alternatives.

Finally, in six Member States (Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy and Latvia), social partners disagreed on the assessment of the time allotted. In Finland, Ireland and Italy, employer organisations considered that the time available for consultation was adequate, whereas unions did not. In Germany and Latvia, trade unions were satisfied, but employer organisations complained that insufficient time was allotted. In **France**, trade unions reported being unsatisfied with the time allotted. Although some of the employer organisations assessed the time devoted to consultation as sufficient, the employer organisation UDES, which represents employers in the social solidarity economy, was also critical of this dimension.

Degree of consultation

Information provided in response to the questionnaires shows that social partners' involvement in the implementation of the measures contained in the RRFs is rather limited (Table 2). Only in Cyprus, Czechia, Estonia, Latvia, Poland, Spain and Sweden did both trade unions and employer organisations agree that they had been involved in the implementation. In Cyprus and Finland, at least one employer organisation and one trade union agreed on this. Moreover, trade unions in **Malta** also agreed on this (information was not available for the other side of industry).⁴

Table 2: Opportunity to contribute to the implementation of the RRF and receive feedback

Parties	Opportunity	No opportunity
Employer organisations and trade unions agree		Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Germany, Greece,* Hungary, Luxembourg, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia
National authorities	Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Denmark, Hungary, Lithuania, Slovakia	
Overall agreement among all parties	Cyprus,** Czechia, Estonia,*** Finland,**** Latvia, Malta,***** Poland, Spain, Sweden	Italy
Diverging views		
Employer organisations	France, Ireland, Lithuania	Denmark, Estonia (Association of Estonian Printing and Packaging Industry)
Trade unions	Denmark	Cyprus (PEO), Finland (Akava), France, Ireland, Lithuania

Notes: Information was not available or was pending confirmation for national authorities in Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Portugal, Romania and Slovenia; for employer associations in Malta; and for at least some trade unions in Cyprus (SEK, DEOK). *In Greece, at least one trade union and one employer organisation reported that there was no proper involvement. However, one employer organisation (SEV) reported being 'neutral' on this. **In Cyprus, at least one trade union and one employer organisation reported that there was proper involvement. However, one trade union (PEO) reported not being involved. ***In Estonia, at least one trade union and one employer organisation agreed that there was proper involvement. However, one employer organisation (Association of Estonian Printing and Packaging Industry) reported that there was no proper involvement. ****In Finland, at least one trade union and one employer organisation reported that there was proper involvement. However, one trade union (Akava) reported not being involved. *****In Malta, information was not available for the employer organisation.

⁴ Although the main employers' organisation in Malta did not reply to most of the questionnaire, oral information provided through the Commission services indicates that employers' organisations show some frustration due to their limited involvement in the consultations on the RRF implementation. This comment applies throughout this report.

However, social partners and national authorities have also highlighted the complexity of providing an overall assessment (see, for example, Box 3 on **Spain**). Generally, social partners' involvement in implementation has varied across measures. Moreover, in some of these Member States, the implementation process has been relatively decentralised across different ministries. For instance, in **Estonia**, each measure is the responsibility of a specific ministry and specific person. Each has its own way of involving social partners and other parties, and each measure's design is somewhat different, needing different amounts of work, collaboration and involvement.

Consensus among social partners

In 13 Member States, both employer organisations and trade unions agreed that they were not effectively involved in the RRP implementation processes (Austria, Belgium,

Bulgaria, Croatia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Luxembourg, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia).

In some cases, lack of involvement in the implementation of the RRP is explained by some of the measures concerning topics that are outside the competencies of social partners (for example, those regulating employment issues). This was reported in **Belgium**, where it is up to the authority in charge of the implementation of each of the different measures to decide the setting for social partners' consultation, and social partners' assessments may vary accordingly. One of the reasons social partners gave for the lack of actual involvement at federal level is that some of the measures included in the RRP fall outside the traditional scope of social dialogue.

In other cases, social partners do not have enough opportunities to contribute even when new institutional settings have been set up (see Box 4 on **Italy**).

Box 4: New institutional settings improving involvement – Italy

In **Italy**, a forum for economic, social and territorial partnership was set up to involve the social partners in the implementation of the RRP. According to the national authorities, this is the only case of a stable institution involving all parties, and should be regarded as a good practice.

Since January 2022, the forum has already held 16 meetings involving all the ministers in charge of the implementation of the RRP measures. However, social partners criticised this new institutional setting, as, in their view, the body appears to be set up for merely informative purposes, and it is not clear whether social partners' views are considered. Nevertheless, they also acknowledged that actual involvement takes place for some specific measures through informal bilateral contact between social partners and the relevant ministers.

The social partners demanded a protocol establishing another ad hoc forum for the partners, to be set up in December 2021. Unlike the partnership forum, this social forum has not yet been set up, and only a few sectoral or regional forums have been established.

Opposing views among social partners

Social partners' assessment of their actual involvement in RRP implementation diverge in four Member States (Denmark, France, Ireland and Lithuania). In **Denmark**, trade unions are more positive than employer organisations, as the latter complained about their lack of formalised involvement in the development of the initiatives. In contrast, in Ireland, France and Lithuania, trade unions complained about the absence of actual involvement, whereas employer associations did not. In **France**, one of the trade unions in the study (FO) noted that the setting of a specific committee for the monitoring of the RRP had not fulfilled social partners' expectations because

of the small number of meetings. According to FO, this framework does not allow for exchanges on the RRP and the monitoring of its indicators. Similarly, the trade union CGT pointed out that there had not been room for discussion.

Balance

As can be seen in Table 3, in most of the Member States, social partners and/or public authorities agree that trade unions and employer organisations have been involved on an equal footing. In eight Member States, at least one social partner expressed concerns that the consultation process was unbalanced (Cyprus, Croatia, Finland, France, Ireland, Lithuania, Portugal and Slovakia).

Table 3: Social partners consulted on an equal footing in the implementation of the RRP

Parties	Balance	No balance
Employer organisations and trade unions agree	Germany, Greece, Romania	
National authorities	Austria, Croatia, Malta, Slovakia	
Overall agreement among all parties	Belgium, Bulgaria, Czechia, Denmark, Estonia, France, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Luxembourg, Poland, Spain, Sweden	Finland, Lithuania
Information missing from one side of industry		
Employer organisations	Austria, Cyprus (CCCI), France (UDES), Slovakia	Cyprus (OEB)*
Trade unions	Malta, Slovenia	Ireland
Diverging views		
Employer organisations	Croatia, Portugal	
Trade unions	Finland (Akava)	Croatia, France (CGT), Portugal (UGT), Slovakia**

Notes: Information was not available for national authorities in Cyprus, Finland, France, Greece, Ireland, Portugal, Romania and Slovenia; for at least some employer organisations in France (UDES, CPME), Estonia (Estonian Association of Information Technology and Telecommunications), Ireland, Malta and Slovenia; and for at least some trade unions in Austria, Cyprus, Portugal (CGTP) and Slovakia. In Greece, at least one trade union (GSEE) and one employer organisation (GSEVEE) reported that there was no proper involvement so there was no assessment of this. *In Cyprus, the employer organisation OEB was involved in the design of one RRP measure, but it had not noticed any involvement on the part of the trade unions. Therefore, OEB assessed the processes of involvement as unbalanced. **In Slovakia, there was no information on this but, as one trade union was excluded from consultation, we assumed consultation was unbalanced.

In Croatia, Portugal and Slovakia, social partners held different views regarding the balance of the consultation process. Employer organisations from these Member States noted that the consultation process was sufficiently balanced between social partners, in contrast to unions, which reported being underrepresented. This is despite, in some cases, social partners giving similar criticism of their involvement. For example, in **Portugal**, social partners are represented on the National Monitoring Commission of the RRP, and agreed that their involvement was cursory and did not extend to the content of individual measures. In **Croatia**, union representatives reported that employer organisations had more opportunities to express their proposals and to be heard by the government. Likewise, in **Slovakia**, union representatives from KOZ SR reported that they had been excluded by the government's decision to set up a specific consulting body for RRP implementation separate from the usual tripartite consultation procedures. In **France**, trade unions examined in the study differ in their assessments: although employer organisations and at least one trade union (CFDT) agreed that the consultation process was balanced, the trade union CGT reported that the employer organisations were given more opportunities to contribute.

Finally, it is worth highlighting the case of **Lithuania**, as it appears to be the only country in which all parties agree on the unbalanced character of consultations. Public authorities argued that, although social partners are subject to a broadly level playing field, employer organisations have greater competencies, and their involvement is therefore more effective than that of trade unions. Similarly, in **Finland**, at least one trade union and one employer organisation agreed that the process was relatively unbalanced, in favour of the employer organisation. There was, however, one trade union, namely Akava, that assessed both parties as being involved on an equal footing.

Involvement in the national reform programmes

EU governments were required to present their NRPs to the Commission by the end of April 2021. Member States' progress on the implementation of the RRP ought to be appropriately reflected in the NRPs, which are to be used as a tool for reporting on progress towards the completion of the RRP. Furthermore, Member States should provide information on the involvement of the social partners and other key institutional actors and relevant stakeholders in the preparation and implementation of policies and reforms. This involvement should be reported in relation to both RRP implementation and the preparation and implementation of reforms and investments included in the NRP. A specific chapter of the NRP should summarise the comments and contributions of social partners, with details to be added in annexes if relevant.

Time allotted for consultation

Information gathered through national questionnaires shows that in 13 Member States social partners agreed that the time allotted for consultation on the preparation of the NRP was not sufficient (Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Finland, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Poland, Portugal, Romania and Slovenia) (Table 4). Generally, social partners took issue with the small number of meetings organised. However, in Member States such as **Germany**, they also criticised the lack of time allowed to provide written comments. In this regard, the trade union confederation DGB reported that the time given to deliver its written opinion on the draft NRP 2022 was three to four days, which, in its view, was insufficient.

Table 4: Time allotted for consultation regarding the preparation of the NRP

Parties	Enough time allotted	Not enough time allotted
Employer organisations and trade unions agree		Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus (OEB, CCCI, PEO), Finland,* Germany, Greece,** Hungary, Latvia, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia
National authorities	Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, France, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Slovakia	
Overall agreement among all parties	Belgium, Czechia, Denmark, Estonia, Malta, Spain, Sweden	Italy
Diverging views		
Employer organisations	Austria, France, Ireland, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Slovakia	
Trade unions		Austria, France, Ireland, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Slovakia

Notes: Information was not available for national authorities in Cyprus, Finland, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Poland, Portugal, Romania and Slovenia; and for at least some trade unions in Cyprus (SEK, DEOK, Pasydy). *In Finland, employer organisations reported not being involved. **In Greece, at least one trade union (GSEE) and one employer organisation (GSEVEE) reported that there was no proper involvement. However, one employer organisation (SEV) reported being satisfied with the time allotted for consultation.

In most of these Member States, insufficient time devoted to consultation meant that social partners had few opportunities to contribute to the NRPs. Nevertheless, in **Finland**, social partners reported being in a position to influence the NRP policy content despite the lack of time for consultation. This assessment must be understood in the national context of social dialogue, as social partners are widely involved in the design of the policies that constitute the content of the NRP – within the national policy framework, where social partners are comprehensively engaged in policymaking, rather than within the European Semester framework.

In contrast, in Belgium, Czechia, Denmark, Estonia, Malta, Spain and Sweden, both the social partners and government representatives surveyed agreed that the former had enough time to participate in the preparation of the 2022 NRPs. However, in some Member States (notably **Belgium**), this assessment was tempered by the relatively low impact that the NRPs currently have on national policies, according to the interviewees. In this regard, social partners have reported that they did not prioritise participating in the NRPs, as it has little impact on domestic policy. Moreover, they have pointed out that they are usually well aware of the topics that are sensitive in Belgium and the recommendations that are going to be formulated by the Commission because they meet with the Belgian desk at the European Commission.

In six Member States (Austria, France, Ireland, Lithuania, Luxembourg and Slovakia), trade unions and employer organisations disagreed on their assessment of the adequacy of the time available for consultation. In all these countries, employer associations were satisfied with the time they were allotted, whereas the unions were not. In **Austria**, trade unions expressed the view that the time available for consultation still fell short, despite the review period for the first draft of the NRP being longer than in previous years. In **France**, trade unions were also extremely critical of the time allotted. For instance, in its contribution annexed to the NRP, the trade union CGT points to the lack of time given to analyse quite a complex document:

[it is] even more dense than usual because it has to take into account three elements: the 2019 and 2020 country recommendations; the follow-up of the RRP taken in application of the European recovery plan; the implementation of the SDGs.

CGT also criticised the fact that there were just two meetings organised:

A first 2-hour meeting with a presentation of a first NRP draft, with 8 peak-level organisations, which means there was only time for a few remarks. Then there was a second 2-hour meeting where you received 800 pages a week beforehand. How could we deal with that at CGT?

National authorities tend to assess the time allotted more favourably than social partners. The exception was **Italy**, where the government agreed with the social partners that there was not enough time given for consultation. In nine Member States (Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, France, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg and Slovakia), national authorities assessed the time allotted more favourably than at least one of the other parties involved in the consultation process. In Austria, Lithuania and Slovakia, national authorities agreed with employer organisations that there was enough time allotted for consultation, but this opinion was not shared by trade unions. In **Slovakia**, trade unions complained that they were given just three to four working days to comment on the NRP.

Degree of consultation

According to the study's results, social partners in most Member States had the opportunity to get involved in the development of the 2022 NRPs to some extent (Table 5). However, in only seven Member States (Czechia, Denmark, Estonia, Latvia, Malta, Spain and Sweden) did all the social partners and government representatives interviewed agree that this was an actual consultation process whereby social partners got feedback or responses to their proposals. Nevertheless, in the case of **Estonia**, national authorities acknowledged that there was only 'modest' involvement, as greater efforts were put into the implementation of RRP measures.

Table 5: Opportunity to contribute to the implementation of the NRP and receive feedback

Parties	Involvement	No involvement
Employer organisations and trade unions agree		Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus (OEB, CCCI, PEO), Finland, Greece,* Hungary, Luxembourg, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia
National authorities	Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, France, Germany, Italy, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Slovakia	
Overall agreement among all parties	Czechia, Denmark, Estonia, Latvia, Malta, Spain, Sweden	
Diverging views		
Employer organisations	Austria, France, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, Slovakia	Germany
Trade unions	Germany	Austria, France, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, Slovakia

Notes: Information was not available or was pending confirmation for national authorities in Cyprus, Finland, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Poland, Portugal, Romania and Slovenia; and for some trade unions in Cyprus (SEK, DEOK and Pasydy). *In Greece, at least one trade union (GSEE) and one employer organisation (GSEVEE) reported that there was no proper involvement. However, one employer organisation (SEV) reported being 'neutral' on this.

In contrast, in 12 Member States, both trade unions and employer organisations noted that they did not receive a proper response to their proposals from the government or that there was no effective involvement (Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus,⁵ Finland, Greece, Hungary, Luxembourg, Poland, Portugal, Romania and Slovenia). For instance, in **Bulgaria**, social partners stated that their presence at meetings had more the profile of an observer's role than of actual involvement in the implementation of the NRP. In **Luxembourg**, despite some improvements having been made, social partners are still critical of their degree of involvement. In this regard, the trade union OGBL acknowledged that the consultation of social partners on the NPR has improved following the submission of a letter to the government by employer organisation UEL and the three nationally representative unions in January 2022. In their joint letter, the social partners stated that they did not wish to continue participating in the consultations over the NRP if the process was not substantially improved. For the purposes of the present study, UEL recognised that the quality of the involvement of social partners had improved in 2022 in comparison with previous years. In **Poland**, however, social partners indicated that their involvement was limited.

Differences in the assessments of social partners are evident in several Member States. Employer organisations assessed their degree of involvement positively in six Member States (Austria, France, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania and Slovakia); this contrasts with trade unions' views in these countries, which criticised the lack of actual involvement. In **Austria**, social partners were given the opportunity to submit their contributions to the draft NRP; however, although some of the amendments proposed by the employer organisation WKO were accepted, the trade unions AK Wien and ÖGB stated that their positions were not taken into account. In contrast, **Germany** appears to be the only case in which unions report being more involved than employer organisations.

Balance

Meaningful social dialogue requires that trade unions and employer organisations are involved on an equal footing. In 13 Member States, both trade unions and employer organisations reported being involved on an equal footing: Belgium, Bulgaria, Czechia, Denmark, Estonia, France, Hungary, Latvia, Luxembourg, Poland, Romania, Spain and Sweden (Table 6). In addition, in Austria, Malta, Portugal and Slovenia, either employer organisations (Austria and Portugal) or trade unions (Malta and Slovenia) assessed the process as being balanced (information was not available from the other side of industry).

⁵ However, the Employers' Federation (OEB) is the implementing body on a relatively large project in the RRP addressing the circular economy of hotels and their involvement in this area should be acknowledged.

Table 6: Social partners consulted on an equal footing in relation to the NRP

Parties	Balance	No balance
Employer organisations and trade unions agree	Hungary, Poland	Lithuania
National authorities	Austria, Croatia, Germany, Italy, Lithuania, Malta, Slovakia	
Overall agreement among all parties	Belgium, Bulgaria, Czechia, Denmark, Estonia, France, Latvia, Luxembourg, Romania, Spain, Sweden	
Information missing from one side of industry		
Employer organisation	Austria, Portugal	
Trade unions	Malta, Slovenia	Ireland
Diverging views		
Employer organisation	Croatia, Germany, Italy, Slovakia	Finland*
Trade unions	Finland	Croatia, Germany, Italy, Slovakia

Notes: Information was not available for national authorities in Cyprus, Finland, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Poland, Portugal and Slovenia; for employer associations in Cyprus, Ireland, Malta and Slovenia; and for trade unions in Austria, Cyprus and Portugal. In Greece, at least one trade union (GSEE) and one employer organisation (GSEVEE) reported that there was no proper involvement, so there was no assessment on this.

*In Finland, employer organisations reported not being involved in the NRP.

Only in **Lithuania** did both social partners agree that the consultation process was unbalanced (see also ‘Balance’ in the previous section, pp. 13–14). Moreover, trade unions in **Ireland** expressed concerns about the unbalanced character of the consultation process (information was not available for employer organisations).

There are also differences reported between the assessments of the social partners regarding the consultation balance. In four Member States, employer organisations indicated that social partners were involved on an equal footing, in contrast with trade unions’ assessment (Croatia, Germany, Italy and Slovakia). In **Finland**, trade unions assessed the consultation as balanced, whereas employer organisations reported not having been involved.

Transparency and visibility

Results from the analysis of national questionnaires show that in only nine Member States – Belgium, Czechia, Denmark, France, Germany, Luxembourg, Malta, Spain and Sweden – did employer organisations, trade unions and national authorities agree that the social partners’ views were explicitly summarised in the NRPs for 2022 (Table 7). In **Estonia**, trade unions and employer organisations reported that their views were given visibility because views were gathered through public consultation and the comments are publicly available in the government’s information system. However, the social partners complained that their views were not reflected in the NRP.

Table 7: Social partners’ views explicitly summarised in the NRP

Parties	Visibility	No visibility
Employer organisations and trade unions agree	Estonia	Croatia, Finland, Greece, Hungary, Lithuania, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia*
National authorities	Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania	Estonia, Italy
Overall agreement among all parties	Belgium, Czechia, Denmark, France, Germany, Luxembourg, Malta, Spain, Sweden	Slovakia
Diverging views		
Employer organisations	Austria, Ireland	Italy, Latvia
Trade unions	Italy, Latvia	Austria, Ireland

Notes: Information was not available for national authorities in Cyprus, Finland, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Poland, Portugal and Slovenia; for employer associations in Bulgaria, Cyprus and Slovenia; and for some trade unions in Bulgaria, Cyprus and Portugal (UGT).

*In Slovenia, information was not available for the employer organisations.

In contrast, in nine Member States, social partners maintained that their views were not explicitly summarised in the NRPs: Croatia, Finland, Greece – no involvement according to social partners – Hungary, Lithuania, Poland, Portugal, Romania and Slovakia. In addition, trade unions in **Slovenia** reported that their views were not taken into account in the NRP (information for employer organisations was not available).

There were diverging opinions between employer organisations and trade unions in Austria, Ireland, Italy and Latvia. In Austria and Ireland, employer organisations reported that their views were made visible in the NRPs, whereas unions reported the opposite. In Italy and Latvia,

trade unions indicated that their views were explicitly covered in the NRPs, while employer organisations stated that their views were not.

Social partners' influence on the national reform programmes

Social partners' influence on the NRPs was measured according to their own perceptions; they were asked to rank their degree of influence as significant, limited or non-existent. Overall, as can be seen from Table 8, social partners did not feel that they had been able to influence the development of the NRPs during 2022.

Table 8: Social partners' influence in the preparation of the 2022 NRPs

Parties	Significant	Limited or relatively limited influence	No influence
Employer organisations and trade unions agree		Estonia, Luxembourg, Poland, Spain	Bulgaria, Greece,* Hungary, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia
National authorities	Cyprus, Denmark, Estonia, Hungary, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Spain	Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Italy, Romania, Slovakia	
Overall agreement among all parties		Belgium, Czechia, Germany, Latvia, Malta, Sweden	
Diverging views			
Employer organisations	Cyprus, Italy (Confindustria)	Austria, Denmark, Croatia, France (MEDEF, UDES), Ireland, Italy (Confeserscenti), Lithuania, Portugal (CCP)	France (CPME), Portugal (CCP, very limited)
Trade unions	Cyprus (SEK), Denmark	Cyprus (PEO, DEOK, Pasydy), Finland, Italy, Portugal (UGT, CGTP)	Austria, Croatia, France, Ireland, Lithuania, Portugal (CGTP)

Notes: Information was not available for national authorities in Finland, France, Greece, Germany, Ireland, Poland, Portugal and Slovenia; and for employer organisations in Finland. *In Greece, at least one trade union (GSEE) and one employer organisation (GSEVEE) reported that they had no influence. However, one employer organisation (SEV) reported it had some limited influence.

The findings show that in 10 Member States social partners, and in some cases also national authorities, agreed that social partners had limited or relatively limited influence: Belgium, Czechia, Estonia, Germany, Latvia, Luxembourg, Malta, Poland, Spain and Sweden. **Italy** could be also included in this group of Member States, as at least one trade union and one employer organisation reported they had limited influence.

However, in seven Member States, social partners agreed that they had no influence: Bulgaria, Greece, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia.

Cyprus is the only country where at least one trade union and one employer organisation reported significant

influence, which was in line with reports from national authorities.

In the remaining Member States, differences between trade unions' and employer organisations' perceptions were reported. Overall, unions reported lower levels of influence than employer organisations. Trade unions from Austria, Croatia, France, Ireland, Lithuania and Portugal reported having no influence (see Box 5 for an analysis of government initiatives to bolster social dialogue in Ireland). In contrast, employer organisations in these Member States reported limited or relatively limited influence. On the contrary, in **Denmark**, trade unions reported significant influence, whereas employer organisations reported only limited or relatively limited influence.

Box 5: Review of collective bargaining and industrial relations – Ireland

In Ireland, the government established the Labour Employer Economic Forum (LEEF) in March 2021 to provide a forum for employers, unions and the government to discuss various employment-related issues (such as the labour market, job creation, equality, competitiveness). In the same year, it established the National Economic Dialogue, which meets annually (in July) to facilitate discussion among the social partners prior to the budget (usually published in October). However, unlike the social partnership agreements, which were rigidly implemented and monitored at the highest level of government, LEEF and the National Economic Dialogue are broad consultations that place no obligation on the government to agree to and implement (or include in the budget) anything that has been discussed.

On 30 March 2021, a high-level working group under the auspices of LEEF was set up to review collective bargaining and the industrial relations landscape. The review focused on the following terms of reference: (i) examine the issue of trade union recognition and its implications for collective bargaining processes; (ii) examine the adequacy of the workplace relations framework supporting the conduct and determination of pay and conditions of employment, having regard to the legal, economic and social conditions in which it operates; (iii) consider the legal and constitutional impediments that may exist in the reform of the current systems; and (iv) review the current statutory wage-setting mechanisms and, where appropriate, make recommendations for reform.

The high-level group on collective bargaining has met several times and a public consultation process seeking views on the proposals being considered was held from 26 May to 16 June 2022. The final report was delivered to the Tánaiste (the deputy head of the government of Ireland) and the Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment in October 2022 (LEEF, 2022).

In the RRP, the government noted the establishment of the Social Dialogue Unit in the Department of the Taoiseach (the head of the government of Ireland). This unit will focus on supporting engagement with the social partners through LEEF and the National Economic Dialogue, while strengthening the overall approach to social dialogue. According to the Department of the Taoiseach, the RRP received 110 written submissions from a wide range of social partners; submissions were summarised in the final plan.

In **Finland**, trade unions reported having had limited influence on the development of the RRP; there was no information on this matter available for the employer organisations.

Finally, information collected from national authorities reveals, as for the other aspects covered in this chapter, that they tend to assess the social partners' involvement in the process more favourably than do the social partner organisations themselves.

2 Institutional governance framework: Key changes

This chapter analyses the features of the institutional governance framework for involving social partners in RRP implementation and NRP design, and highlights, where possible, key changes identified. The chapter focuses exclusively on the 11 Member States selected for in-depth analysis: Bulgaria, Croatia, Estonia, Greece, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia.

Institutional governance framework for RRP implementation

The 2022 Annual Sustainable Growth Survey (ASGS) sets out the need to involve social partners in the implementation of the recovery and resilience plans (RRP) through dedicated regular meetings. However, it leaves Member States with the autonomy to set up involvement procedures in accordance with national social dialogue frameworks and practices. The 2023 ASGS equally calls on all Member States to engage actively with social partners.

A previous Eurofound study (Eurofound, 2022) found that social partners' involvement in the preparation of the RRP took place through well-established institutional settings and/or ad hoc meetings. In several Member States, social

partners were involved through both mechanisms (for example, in the case of the RRP, in **Czechia**). Moreover, in some Member States, involvement took place through existing tripartite bodies (such as economic and social councils) in addition to ad hoc meetings or specific working groups created to discuss the NRPs (for example, in Poland and Portugal).

When analysing the institutional settings for involving the social partners in the implementation of the RRP in the 11 Member States considered in this chapter (Table 9), the Member States fall into four distinct groups:

- two Member States where mainly ad hoc and fragmented consultation was reported (Estonia and Greece)
- one country (Slovenia) where no involvement was reported, mainly because it had gone through an electoral period (elections were held in April 2022)
- Member States where new RRP monitoring bodies have been set up (Hungary, Poland, Romania and Slovakia)
- Member States where the governments relied on the same institutionalised tripartite bodies as in 2021 (Bulgaria, Croatia, Latvia and Lithuania)

Table 9: Institutional settings for involving social partners in the implementation of the RRP

Institutionalised tripartite body or council	New monitoring/implementation committees	Ad hoc consultation	No involvement
Bulgaria, Croatia, Latvia, Lithuania	Hungary, Poland, Romania, Slovakia	Estonia, Greece*	Slovenia

Note: *In Greece, one employer organisation (SEV) reported that they were involved through the institutionalised tripartite/bipartite council. According to the trade union GSEE and employer organisation GSEVEE, only ad hoc consultation took place.

New monitoring committees

The establishment of new tripartite groups or bodies in Hungary, Poland, Romania and Slovakia, which specialise in the monitoring or implementation of the RRP, is a positive institutional development that should enhance social partners' participation and increase public accountability during RRP implementation. However, in three of these Member States (Hungary, Poland and Slovakia), the design of the new bodies has excluded some major social partners, and its representativeness and inclusiveness have therefore been called into question.

In **Hungary**, the RRF Monitoring Committee was set up in September 2021. It comprises 40 members from ministries (18); civil society organisations (19), such as the Energyclub, the non-profit Men's Club Ltd and the National Association of Large Families; and social partners (3). Regarding the social partners, two trade unions and

one employer organisations are represented. On the trade union side, MOSZ and LIGA are included. Neither the biggest trade union confederation (MASZSZ) nor the big sectoral trade unions were invited to the monitoring committee. On the employer side, the Hungarian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (MKIK) is represented. The main employer organisations, such as VOSZ and MGYOSZ, are not members of the monitoring committee. The members receive the drafts of the calls by e-mail, and they may send (upload) their comments.

In **Poland**, when the National Resilience and Recovery Plan Monitoring Committee was initially created it had around 70 members but did not include social partners' representatives. This initial structure was criticised in a social partners' joint statement that called on the government to strengthen social dialogue in the context of RRP implementation (Związek Rzemiosła Polskiego, 2021). Following this joint statement, the government

included six representatives from the social partners but excluded three social partners with legal representative status. Social partners therefore called on the government to increase the number of seats on the committee. Based on the information gathered in the interview with the Ministry of Development Funds and Regional Policy for this study, the government plans to accept the social partners' demand and will include the nine social partners with representative status on the committee.

In **Romania**, the Ministry of Investments and European Projects set up the RRP Monitoring Committee as a special body with the explicit purpose of involving social partners in the monitoring of the implementation of the RRP. The body will include all nationally representative trade unions (Cartel ALFA, BNS, CNSLR-Frăția, CSDR, CSN Meridian) and employers' confederations (UGIR, PNR, Conpirom, Concordia, CNIPMMR), alongside other civil society organisations.

In **Slovakia**, the Government Council for the Recovery and Resilience Plan was established. It is a consulting body of the government and has 43 members, including

representatives of social partners, regional self-government, research and civil society organisations. So far, it has held one meeting – on 28 January 2022. The meeting dealt with procedural issues concerning its functioning. As in Hungary and Poland, one major social partner, the employer organisation APZD, is not represented, despite four formal demands for its inclusion.

Involvement of the same institutionalised tripartite/bipartite bodies

In Member States where governments have relied on the same institutionalised tripartite bodies as in 2021 (Bulgaria, Croatia, Latvia and Lithuania), doubts have arisen regarding the extent to which social partners have been involved in the implementation phase.

In **Bulgaria**, both nationally representative employers and trade unions have stated that their involvement was more active, and that they were consulted more frequently, during the plan's preparation by the Deputy Prime Minister, up to 12 May 2021 (see Box 6).

Box 6: Political elections affecting the involvement of social partners

The involvement of social partners in the RRP in **Bulgaria** has varied significantly because four governments have been engaged in its preparation, submission and implementation. The first stage of the plan's preparation took place at the end of the third mandate (May 2017 to May 2021) of the government headed by Boyko Borisov. The second stage took place within the caretaker government mandate under Deputy Prime Minister Atanas Pekanov (May 2021 to December 2021). During the third stage, the RRP was accepted by the European Commission, under the mandate of Kiril Petkov (December 2021 to July 2022), who had to resign following a vote of no confidence in the parliament. Since August 2022, a new government headed by Galab Donev has been in power.

Both nationally representative employers and trade unions interviewed have stated that their involvement was more active, and that they were consulted more often during the first stage and the plan's preparation, notably by Deputy Prime Minister Tomislav Donchev. They also had active communication with the caretaker government during the second stage, whereas their involvement has been limited in the third stage. These social partners made critical remarks (and a number of written statements) on the RRP's content. For example, the information sent to social partners at the time of the preparation of the plan (first stage) lacked complete financial information, which meant that they had to construct a database to gain a more comprehensive view of the plan. With the caretaker government, social partners managed to achieve some temporary improvements – for example, increased grant funding, which, however, was later reduced again.

In **Italy**, following the collapse of Mario Draghi's coalition government in July 2022, the country voted in a snap general election on 25 September and, as a result, a new far right and right-wing coalition government took office in October 2022.

In **Slovenia**, the period analysed (first half of 2022) was strongly marked by the fact it was the pre-election period. National assembly elections were held on 24 April 2022, and a new government took office on 1 June 2022. The new government has made statements stressing the valuable contribution of social dialogue and its willingness to continue conversations with social partners.

In **Croatia**, the social partners – particularly the Trade Union Confederation – emphasised that the Economic and Social Council only provided them with information on the RRP on 29 March 2021, when the draft of the document was finalised. They report that they were not involved during the implementation phase.

In **Lithuania**, formal consultation was carried out through the main tripartite social dialogue institution,

the Tripartite Council of the Republic of Lithuania (TCRL). At the same time, there were a large number of working groups formed in the ministries. Although trade unions criticise their actual involvement in these working groups, employer organisations assessed these bodies positively. In the employer organisations' views, these working groups provide a lot of information on the processes and content of the RRP reforms, and give the social partners the opportunity to express their views.

In **Latvia**, the main setting for involvement was the National Tripartite Cooperation Council. In addition, social partners were consulted on an ad hoc basis through specifically designed working groups. However, social partners reported that they were not directly involved in the implementation phase, except for one measure (see Chapter 3).

Institutional governance framework for NRP design

When looking at the 11 Member States analysed in this chapter, information gathered (Table 10) shows, first,

Table 10: Main institutional settings for involving social partners in the NRPs

Institutionalised tripartite/ bipartite body or council	Specific body/working group	Ad hoc consultation	No involvement
Croatia, Hungary, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia	Bulgaria	Estonia, Latvia, Romania	Greece, Slovenia

Second, the information shows that there are three Member States (Estonia, Latvia and Romania) where ad hoc consultation only was reported. In **Estonia**, both trade unions and employer organisations reported continuity from previous years, leading to poor involvement. According to the information provided by the national authorities, there was only one public one-hour seminar to discuss the state of play and the changes made, and then the draft was put up for public consultation (without sending the documents directly to social partners). Several additional thematic meetings were held, but these involved ministries and experts, and not social partners. In **Latvia**, the procedure and the involvement of social partners in the NRP did not change. In 2022, as in 2021, written exchanges were the main form of social partners' involvement. In the case of **Romania**, unions and employer organisations pointed out that the consultation process on the NRP was practically non-existent and that their contributions had no consequence whatsoever.

Third, there is one country (Bulgaria) where consultation was carried out through a specific working group. In **Bulgaria**, social partners were partly involved in preparing the NRP through Working Group 31, under the Ministry of Finance, which is regulated by Decree No. 667 of the Council of Ministers of 21 September 2021. Social partners' involvement is weakly institutionalised because the working group lacks a mandate to consult the social partners on the NRP. Indeed, the chair may decide whether to invite social partners to meetings of the working group. Under this institutional framework, social partners were invited to contribute to a draft outline of the NRP 2022 exclusively by email and were not invited to any meeting.

Finally, there are five Member States where the social partners were involved through institutionalised tripartite bodies (Croatia, Hungary, Lithuania, Poland and Slovakia), which, in the case of **Lithuania**, were combined with other procedures (ministry working groups).

that social partners were not formally involved in the preparation of the national reform programme (NRP) in Greece or Slovenia. In the case of **Slovenia**, the lack of involvement is mainly explained by the fact that the NRP was drafted in a pre-election period – National Assembly elections were held in Slovenia on 24 April 2022, and a new government took office on 1 June 2022. Because of this, the NRP 2022 was prepared taking into account the unchanged policies, and therefore it contains concrete measures and key structural reforms taken from the RRP.

In **Croatia**, social partners were merely informed about the 2022 NRP during two meetings. On 4 April 2022, at a session of the Economic and Social Council, the government informed the social partners about the process of preparing the NRP, and subsequently, on 19 April, a meeting was held with the social partners to inform them about planned measures and activities. Social partners stated that the quality of the procedure for involving them had not improved since the planning stage; rather, it had deteriorated.

In **Hungary**, the draft NRP 2022 was subject to consultation with the social partners in three tripartite institutionalised bodies, as in previous years. On the one hand, social partners were consulted in two bodies that deal with employment relations issues for public service employees: the joint meeting of the National Civil Service Interest Conciliation Council (OKÉT) and the National Civil Service Interest Conciliation Council (KOMT). On the other hand, social partners were consulted through the Permanent Consultation Forum of the Competitive (Private) Sector (VKF), where social partners can enter into agreements with the governments on issues relating to employment policy, labour law reforms and income. However, social partners were only invited to make oral comments following an oral explanation of the NRP by the government.

In **Lithuania**, the main settings for consultation on the NRP with social partners are the Tripartite Council (TCRL) and specific working groups created by the ministries responsible for different areas/measures. The decision on the composition of these working groups is a competency of the minister or other official who forms the group. According to the government authorities interviewed, at least two social partners must be included in the working group for the preparation of the programme, and a public debate must be organised after the draft of the development plan has been prepared. The responsible

ministries usually present a complete draft of the NRP for consideration at the TCRL or in the working group(s). Social partners may provide their responses, opinions or proposals in either oral form during the sitting of the TCRL or written form at the working groups. In 2022, four meetings were held in total to discuss the NRP (including those meetings at the TCRL and at the working groups).

In **Poland**, one meeting was organised under the topical team of the Social Dialogue Council. During the meeting, there was information about the 2022 NRP and a brief discussion about the topics connected with it. However,

social partners barely had an opportunity to contribute. According to the social partners interviewed, the Ministry of Finance provided them with information about activities but did not encourage or initiate consultations.

In **Slovakia**, the NRP 2022 was subject to consultation through one meeting at the Economic and Social Council, where a partial draft was presented by the government. Following the meeting, the social partners could contribute through written comments; however, the comments were not considered or responded to by the government, according to information provided by the social partners.

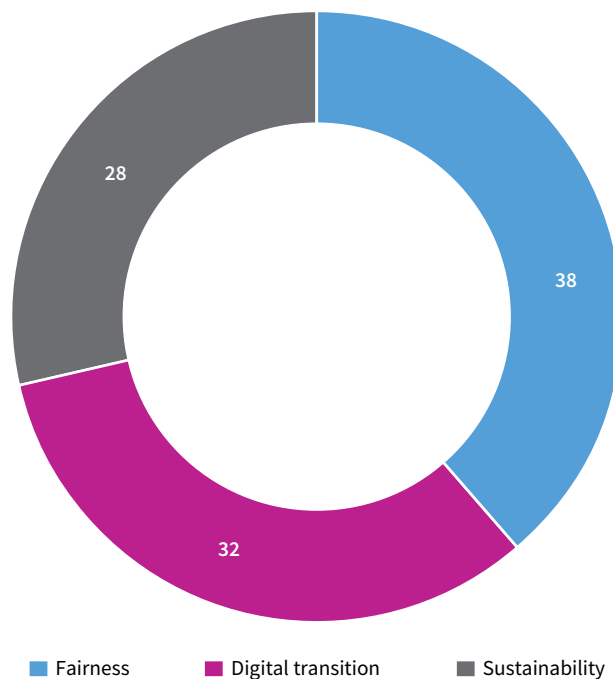
3 Involvement by category of measures

This chapter analyses the involvement of social partners in the most relevant employment, social and economic policy measures included in the national RRP. The analysis focuses exclusively on the 11 Member States selected for in-depth analysis: Bulgaria, Croatia, Estonia, Greece, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia. The analysis covers employer organisations' and trade unions' participation in the consultation process, focusing on the methods of involvement in the consultation process (information, consultation or agreement) and the extent to which both trade unions and employer organisations were involved through the same method for all the measures covered in each policy field.

A total of 75 measures (reforms and policy actions) included in the national RRP of the 11 Member States

analysed were selected by the Network of Eurofound Correspondents and, as much as possible, agreement was reached with the social partner representatives contacted. Based on their potential economic and social impact, national correspondents were asked to select a maximum of six measures from each country, which were grouped according to the three main policy dimensions of the RRP: fairness; fostering the digital transition and productivity; and environmental sustainability. However, in some Member States, more than six measures were selected (nine measures in Greece, for example). As can be seen from Figure 1, the overall distribution of the measures is quite evenly balanced across these three dimensions. It is also worth mentioning that several measures (23 in total) overlapped across categories, so these measures were counted two or three times.

Figure 1: Total number of measures addressed by each policy dimension



Source: Compiled by the authors based on information provided by the Network of Eurofound Correspondents and interviews with national social partners

Fairness

This dimension encompasses measures in diverse policy fields such as welfare benefits (unemployment insurance benefits, care policies, etc.), industrial relations (such as social dialogue legislation), and education or fiscal/tax policies (for example, measures against money laundering). The analysis reveals that social partners in

these Member States were mainly involved through either information or consultation. However, in some Member States, there were differences in the extent to which trade unions and employer organisations were involved.

Table 11 summarises the main social partners' methods of involvement in the implementation of policy measures related to the fairness dimension of the RRP.

Table 11: Social partners' methods of involvement in the implementation of policy measures related to fairness

Method of involvement	Country
Joint agreement (on at least one measure)	Estonia
Consultation (main form of involvement)	Latvia, Lithuania, Romania
Information (main form of involvement)	Croatia, Hungary, Slovenia
Differences in the extent of involvement	Greece, Poland, Slovakia
Information not available	Bulgaria*

Note: *In Bulgaria, social partners refused to select any RRP measures. According to the national correspondent, this was mainly because they were expressing dissatisfaction with the degree to which their views had been taken into account by the government.

Tripartite negotiations

As shown in Table 11, **Estonia** stands out as the only country in which some forms of tripartite negotiations were conducted for the implementation of policy measures included in this policy field. The measure was a legal reform to extend the duration of unemployment benefits, and both peak-level trade unions and employer associations were represented on the joint committee in charge of drafting the bill, which will come into force in June 2023.

Consultation

Consultation was the prevalent form of involvement in Latvia, Lithuania and Romania, albeit to different extents.

In **Latvia**, social partners reported some form of consultation in the two measures included under this policy field, which concerned a reform on the minimum income and a policy plan aiming to improve the sustainability of healthcare. In Lithuania and Romania, social partners were consulted on only some of the initiatives selected under this policy field.

In **Lithuania**, social partners were partly involved in a reform of the tax system, which aimed to ensure a more socially just, growth-friendly tax structure, using taxes to encourage consumers to change their behaviour and adapt to the changing needs of society. Trade unions also reported that they were involved in the reforms of the education system. However, employer and trade union organisations were not involved in considering the guaranteed minimum income protection reform, as proposals for this reform were drafted by experts.

In **Romania**, social partners were involved in the reform of social dialogue legislation. This reform has made a difference in the way in which social dialogue typically works in the country, which is often limited to a formal process, with no real exchanges among parties. The reform is particularly welcomed by social partners, as it will modify previous legislation on social dialogue passed in the context of the 2010–2011 austerity packages. The reform aims to bring collective bargaining legislation in line with the International Labour Organization recommendations and principle 8 of the European Pillar of Social Rights.

Information

Information was the main method of involvement in Croatia, Hungary and Slovenia. In these Member States, both groups of social partners were informed about the

implementation of all the measures contained in their respective national RRP.

In **Croatia**, social partners were only informed about the RRP by the Economic and Social Council on 29 March 2021, when the document had been finalised. No further involvement in the implementation of the measures was reported.

In **Hungary**, social partners' involvement is channelled through a monitoring committee. As mentioned in Chapter 2, major employer organisations (VOSZ and MGYOSZ) and trade unions (MASZSZ) at national level have been excluded from representation. Moreover, under this policy field, the teachers' trade union PSZ complained about its lack of involvement in those measures dealing with reforms in the education system (such as a policy reform aiming to ensure equal access to digital education for students and teachers). Thus, although some social partners were informed, some doubts have arisen about the inclusiveness of this process.

In **Slovenia**, trade unions and employer organisations were at least informed about an investment measure aiming to strengthen the resilience of the labour market (by increasing participation in the labour market and improving the quality of jobs) and in the context of a reform in the social security system. Although there was no detailed information on the process of involvement in those two measures, it is worth noting that social partners reported being generally unsatisfied with how they were involved in the implementation of RRP measures.

Differences in the extent of involvement between social partners

This was highlighted in Greece, Poland and Slovakia. These differences are relevant, as they may be an indication of either the absence of an institutional framework for involvement or biases in the inclusion of social partners in the implementation of the RRP.

In **Greece**, the government seems to have favoured the involvement of employer organisations over that of trade unions in specific measures dealing with aspects related to digitalisation and sustainability. However, both groups of social partners complain that although they have been consulted in the design of initiatives, they are excluded from the implementation. This is the case with the envisaged reform of the public employment service, in which the social partners' role on the management board has been quite weakened compared with their role in the previous scheme. Another example is the

implementation of a new General Register of Trade Union Organisations, enacted by Law 4808/2021, which did not include social partners' proposals. Both employers and trade union organisations have raised concerns regarding legal and technical issues arising from the register's implementation. Greek trade union GSEE also appealed to the Council of State questioning the constitutionality and legality of the articles of the law related to the register. The government ignored these concerns, and the legal appeal, which has not yet been considered, and activated the regulation. However, the law faces implementation problems in practice.

In **Poland**, social partners reported being satisfied with the inclusiveness of the consultation process for the design and implementation phase of the RRP compared with other social dialogue processes in the country. They achieved balanced representation on the National Resilience and Recovery Plan Monitoring Committee, which initially did not include social partners' representatives. However, consultation processes have resulted in different degrees of social partners' involvement in the implementation of the measures in this policy field. Trade unions were consulted in the processing of the draft bill regulating social economy entities, but their proposals were not taken into consideration, whereas employer associations did not even issue any comments. On the other hand, employer organisations were consulted on a legal reform to reduce the administrative burden for companies, and their proposals were partially incorporated into the draft bill, whereas unions did not even take part in the process. Social partners have not played a role in the implementation of other measures covering additional investments in childcare facilities to support working parents. National authorities argued that these measures

are part of ongoing negotiations with the European Commission, and will be subject to public consultation at a later stage.

In **Slovakia**, trade unions were involved in the two measures covered by this policy field, which were related to legal amendments against corruption and money laundering, while employer organisations reported not being involved. Generally, it appears that there were no proper consultations on individual measures of the RRP in the framework of tripartite social dialogue institutions (the Economic and Social Council). The RRP was drafted by experts from the government with no real involvement of social partners. Most of the employer organisations' proposals and comments during 'interministerial' commenting procedures were not accepted.

Digital transition and productivity

This dimension encompasses a great variety of measures intended to foster productivity and bring digital technologies to business, citizenships and public administration (for example, financial support for digitalisation of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), and digitalisation of public employment services). In several Member States (such as Estonia, Greece and Lithuania), the measures included under this policy field were also classified as fairness-oriented measures and have therefore been analysed in the section 'Fairness' above.

The information gathered through the present study is summarised in Table 12. Generally, the data show that social partners were insufficiently involved in this policy field or that governments did not consult trade unions and employer organisations on an equal footing.

Table 12: Social partners' methods of involvement in the implementation of policy measures related to digital transition and productivity

Method of involvement	Country
Information (main form of involvement)	Croatia, Hungary, Lithuania (only one measure), Slovenia
Differences in the extent of involvement	Estonia, Greece, Latvia, Poland, Slovakia
No involvement	Romania
Information not available	Bulgaria*

Note: *In Bulgaria, social partners refused to select any RRP measures. According to the national correspondent, this was mainly because they were expressing dissatisfaction with the degree to which their views had been taken into account by the government.

As shown in Table 12, information was the main method for involving the social partners in Croatia, Hungary and Slovenia. In all these countries, both groups of social partners were informed about all the measures selected in this policy field.

Social partners were also informed in **Lithuania**, although to a lesser extent. Both groups of social partners were informed about the implementation of the reform and modernisation of public employment services. However, they were not involved in other measures under this policy field (for example, smart tax administration). This reflects the fragmentation and lack of coordination of

social partners' involvement, with representatives split into different working groups under the various ministries or public authorities in charge of the implementation of specific measures.

Differences in the extent of social partners' involvement are identified in Estonia, Greece, Latvia, Poland and Slovakia. In **Estonia**, social partners were not involved at all in the measures aiming to foster digital transformation in enterprises and develop a skills reform for the digital transformation of businesses. On the other hand, sectoral business associations were involved because the government considered these to be business-related

measures. Nevertheless, trade unions in **Estonia** have highlighted the importance of skills development for years, and have contributed to various measures to improve the skills levels there. Hence, they were extremely critical of their lack of participation in the reform on digital skills.

In **Greece**, employer organisations played a more prominent role in the implementation of this type of measure than trade unions. Although unions were absent from the implementation of most of these measures, one employer organisation (SEV) noted that the national authorities had properly involved employer organisations in the design and implementation of one measure regarding upskilling and retraining programmes on digital skills for unemployed people. At the same time, both groups of social partners were consulted on only one of the five measures covered under this policy field.⁶

In **Latvia**, trade unions were consulted on the three measures selected in this policy field, whereas employer organisations reported no involvement, with the exception of one measure related to investments for increasing businesses' energy efficiency.

In **Poland**, trade unions were consulted on the three measures covered, whereas employer organisations were consulted on two (and informed about the third). These measures consisted of different reforms aiming to ensure universal access to high-speed internet, strengthen cooperation mechanisms between research institutions and companies, and promote digitalisation through tax incentives. Social partners, and especially employer organisations, were satisfied with the setting for consultation on these measures, but differences in their assessment are explained by feedback and responses to their proposals by national authorities in the preparation of the national RRP. It is argued that social partners will

have the opportunity to influence the implementation of the RRP once the monitoring committee is established.

In **Slovakia**, trade unions noticed that they had the opportunity to comment on one of these measures (related to cyber security solutions in public administration), as it was made subject to a formal consultation process (*medzirezortné pripomienkové konanie – MPK*).

Finally, in **Romania**, according to the responses provided by the social partners, there was no involvement in the measures implemented in this policy field, as has been reported for other areas. Indeed, social partners were only involved in the reform of the legislation on social dialogue (see section 'Fairness' above).

Environmental sustainability

The approved RRP strongly support the green transition goals. Each RRP should dedicate a minimum of 37% of the allocated funds to climate action. In addition to this climate target, every individual measure must comply with the 'do no significant harm principle' in relation to the wider set of environmental objectives.⁷ Although all plans exceed the 37% benchmark (40% of the plans' allocated funds are dedicated to climate objectives), a number of Member States have used more than half of their allocation for climate objectives (European Commission, 2022e).

Regarding social partners' methods of involvement in the implementation of policy measures in the field of sustainability (Table 13), responses provided by social partners show that only in Latvia and Poland were both trade unions and employer organisations involved through consultation on the three measures covered.

Table 13: Social partners' methods of involvement in the implementation of policy measures related to sustainability

Method of involvement	Country
Consultation (main form of involvement)	Latvia, Poland
Information (main form of involvement)	Croatia, Hungary, Slovenia
Differences in the extent of involvement	Estonia, Greece, Romania
No involvement	Lithuania, Slovakia
Information not available	Bulgaria*

Note: *In Bulgaria, social partners refused to select any RRP measures. According to the national correspondent, this was mainly because they were expressing dissatisfaction with the degree to which their views had been taken into account by the government.

⁶ This measure consisted of the restructuring and rebranding of the Greek public employment service and the establishment of a new Council of Social Partners. However, social partners could not influence the content of the reform, and it entails significant limitations on the representation and responsibilities of social partners in the governing body of the new public institution.

⁷ The 'do no significant harm' principle states that the actions (i.e. reforms and investments) outlined in national RRP may not cause any significant harm to the environment. It is a fundamental principle that must be followed to access funding from the RRF. The Commission adopted technical guidance on the principle on 12 February 2021 (European Commission, 2021c).

In Croatia, Hungary and Slovenia, both groups of social partners were merely informed about the implementation of the measures selected. As previously noted, in **Croatia**, social partners agreed that they were only informed once the draft of the RRP was concluded, and that they did not have the opportunity to contribute to the design of the measures. Similarly, in **Slovenia**, the government merely informed the social partners about the priority areas and measures planned in the RRP, without the possibility of the partners influencing the order of priorities or the content of measures, as the government opted to bypass the main tripartite social dialogue and consultative body in the country (the Economic and Social Council).

Differences in the extent of involvement of social partners were identified in Greece, Estonia and Romania. In **Greece**,

although employer organisations were consulted on most of the measures covered (three out of four), trade unions were only involved in one of the measures covered in this policy field, according to the interviewees. In **Estonia**, only sectoral business associations were involved in reforms aimed at changing the business model in the manufacturing sector and developing green skills to support the green transition of enterprises. In **Romania**, although trade unions were not involved, individual employers from the gas and oil industry took part in ad hoc discussions around the adoption of a decarbonisation law as part of the measures in this field.

Finally, in **Lithuania** and **Slovakia**, both groups of social partners reported no involvement in the implementation of the two measures included.

4 Summary of main findings and policy pointers

Overall involvement

- Based on the methodology applied and the answers provided, the findings of the study show some degree of discontent with the overall quality of the social partners' involvement in implementing the RRP and preparing the NRP in the 2022 cycle. The results show that involvement is rather weak in many Member States, as reported by the social partners in particular, although this was found to an uneven extent across the EU and across the different types of consultation processes.
- The quality and intensity of the involvement confirms once more that in countries with well-established social dialogue frameworks the implementation of reforms follows a path involving regular engagement with social partners.
- According to the information received, the involvement of the social partners could have been more prominent during the design of the overarching components of the RRP, which mainly took place in 2021, than during the implementation phase. This is probably a result of the different dynamics governing the preparation and the multiannual implementation of the RRP, since the development of some measures approved and their implementation may have taken more time than its design, involving more players and management levels.
- Social partners reported that, as the implementation of the RRP remains very unequal across policy initiatives (reforms and investments), it was hard for them to provide a general assessment of their own overall role. While their overall assessment would be generally positive, there was some discontent with regard to specific initiatives.
- In cases where the policy measures implemented during 2021–2022 consisted of reforms, this may have facilitated stronger involvement, as such measures have to pass through legal procedures and institutional settings in which social partners participate. However, trade unions are particularly critical with regard to their involvement in the implementation of investments, which has been rather limited so far. Employer organisations are more positive about their involvement in the implementation of investment initiatives set out in the RRP, including those measures addressing SMEs (such as digitalisation policies).
- Social partners in many Member States still complain that, even where it does take place, consultation is typically a rather formal and somewhat superficial process, with social partners unable to provide effective input and the government taking decisions unilaterally. Meaningful involvement is difficult when social partners are not given proper information and not allowed enough time to provide authorities with substantial contributions on the content of proposals during feedback rounds.
- These overall findings should be considered in the context of national social dialogue practices and the impact that an unprecedented procedure such as the development of the RRP has had on national policymaking. Except for some Member States and dimensions analysed (for example, time allotted for consultation in Denmark), social partners' assessments are similar for the implementation of the RRP and the preparation of the NRP. With a few exceptions (Czechia, Spain and Sweden), the social partners found the following.
 - The time allotted to social partner involvement in preparing the NRP or implementing the various measures included in the RRP was insufficient.
 - A genuine process of consultation and discussion was lacking in some Member States, despite the fact that several Member States have established new bodies to involve the social partners in RRP implementation.
 - National authorities tended not to accurately reflect trade unions' and employer organisations' views and proposals in the NRP.
 - Trade unions and employer organisations generally had limited or relatively limited influence at most on the preparation of the NRP.
 - Although social partner involvement through tripartite social dialogue institutions can provide more opportunities for meaningful contributions, the study's results show that participation in these bodies was mainly limited to information exchange.
- However, these assessments are nuanced and should be contextualised, as social partners' assessments may be influenced by various factors, such as the following.
 - Most RRP were approved more than a year ago, but Member States' differing speeds in relation to the implementation of reforms and investments have led to varying assessments and data that are not easily comparable. The European Commission reported on these uneven speeds in its 2022 review of the implementation of the RRF, although the overall assessment was quite positive. This uneven progress must be considered when analysing social partners' assessments of their involvement, as some Member States are already

- forging ahead, whereas others are in the early stages of implementation.
- In this regard, there is a consensus among social partners in some Member States (Belgium, Cyprus and Poland) that it is still too early to assess social partners' involvement in the implementation of measures because the implementation process is in the early stages. As a result, some reforms and investments have not yet started (and no consultation has taken place). In contrast, the RRP may include existing and/or mature measures, on which, as national authorities argued, there was no need for consultation.
 - Other factors widely understood by social partners – and national authorities, in some cases – as limiting the quality of their involvement are the complexity and diversity of the measures in the RRP (and insufficient time allotted to consultation). In addition, social partners in some Member States noted the technical complexity of some of the measures set out in the RRP. This complexity has in some cases favoured expert consultation over social dialogue processes.
 - The governance architecture in some federal-type Member States (Belgium and Germany) influences the level of implementation (central, federal or regional). This level is important: some policy measures and investments can have a significant impact at territorial level, as regional governments are responsible for the implementation of measures set out in the RRP.
 - Another aspect of the management phase of the RRP is that, once formally approved, and even once the first RRF payments are disbursed, the management of the implementation of the various measures falls in practice under the remit of different ministries or departments, which may contribute to a lack of coordination. It was reported that, depending on the measure and the setting (department, ministry, etc.), the forms of consultation vary significantly in terms of quality.
 - The minor financial impact of the RRF in some Member States (Luxembourg and some Nordic countries) may be reflected in social partners' low level of interest in being involved in some policy actions, reforms and investments, as these will not have a significant impact on the economic structure of the country.
 - Equally, the importance that the social partners assign to the NRP in the national context (for instance, based on the extent to which it contains new policy orientations or only summarises policies already enacted and discussed) has been reported to influence the views of the social partners, along with the likely higher policy priority given to the RRP implementation in relation to the NRP.
 - National disputes or diverging views on social dialogue may have affected the responses provided in some countries: when tripartite labour relations are tense, the shadow cast by these disputes may influence views on social partners' involvement in the discussions on the RRP and NRP.
 - The mismatch between expectations about and the actual level of participation of the social partners in the implementation of the RRP or the preparation of the NRP is still an issue. There are differences in vision (and ambition) between public authorities and social partners, although trade unions are much more critical with regard to their lack of participation in the decision-making process than employer organisations.

Involvement by category of measures in 11 Member States

- The involvement of the social partners in the development and implementation of the RRP measures has been uneven across dimensions in the 11 Member States studied. Conclusive results are hard to establish owing to timing issues (measures unevenly implemented or at a very early stage) and the diversity of forms of involvement reported. An overall assessment indicates that social partners tended to be more involved in measures under the fairness dimension, as these addressed topics that are generally within their competencies (welfare benefits, social dialogue, etc.).
- Nevertheless, this does not apply to all the Member States, and there are cases in which social partners were critical of the quality of their involvement in key measures that should have been the subject of meaningful social dialogue processes (for instance, in the case of the new General Register of Trade Union Organisations in Greece).
- Social partners were less involved in those measures dealing with sustainability and, in particular, the digital transition and productivity. In some cases, the lack of social partner involvement in those dimensions can be explained by the fact that they encompass measures that require a high degree of technical expertise and may fall outside social partners' traditional competencies. For some policy measures classified under those dimensions, governments opted to consult experts from sectoral associations rather than peak-level social partners. However, it should also be noted that in some Member States either trade unions or employer organisations criticised the government for neglecting relevant social partner knowledge in some of the areas addressed through digitalisation or climate transition measures (for example, in relation to digital skills in Estonia).
- The analysis has shown that there has been unequal involvement of trade unions and employer organisations in several measures. Generally, it

appears that employer organisations were more prominently involved than trade unions in the implementation of measures dealing with digital skills (for example, in Estonia and Greece) and sustainability (for example, in Estonia, Greece and Romania). In contrast, trade unions in some Member States were more involved in measures in the fairness dimension (for instance, regulation of social economy entities in Poland or legal amendments against corruption in Slovakia).

- The establishment of new tripartite groups or bodies that specialise in the monitoring or implementation of the RRP in Hungary, Poland, Romania and Slovakia may have contributed to enhancing social partners' participation. However, the analysis carried out regarding specific measures shows that the establishment of those new bodies was not sufficient to ensure that social partners were able to participate in and influence all the measures implemented under the RRP. For instance, in Romania, social partners were involved in the reform of the legislation on social dialogue (see section on 'Fairness' above) but were generally excluded from participation in the development and implementation of the remaining measures.

Policy pointers

- Greater efforts should be made to increase the quality of social partners' involvement in order to ensure a balanced implementation of RRP, aligned with the interests of employers, employees and society at large.
- The involvement of social partners in policymaking and particularly in the implementation of the RRP is an indicator of the quality of social dialogue. As seen during the COVID-19 crisis, when it certainly

contributed to managing the crisis and mitigating its negative economic and social effects, good-quality social dialogue pays off in turbulent times when stability is needed to face ongoing economic uncertainty.

- Once the RRP have been adopted, it is important to keep social partners involved in the implementation of the measures. The preparation of the RRP should not be seen as separate from the implementation phase, even if they are different in administrative nature. The quality of involvement should not worsen during the implementation phase.
- As the implementation of the RRF, including REPowerEU, will remain at the centre of the EU's macroeconomic policy, aimed at ensuring a smooth twin transition, the implementation of the various reforms and investments included in the RRP will require an effective new dynamic to involve social partners smoothly and effectively in consultation on all measures in those Member States where social dialogue has been reported to be uneven and underdeveloped.
- Care should be taken to ensure that gaps and fragmentation between different governmental departments' activities and different levels of government do not prevent the effective involvement of social partners in the implementation of the RRP. A homogeneous or unified national governmental approach to including social partners in RRP implementation would help to facilitate consultation periods and procedures. Equally, Member States should consider efforts to improve reporting in the RRP on the involvement of social partners, such as indicating which measures are supported by social partners or providing further details on consultation procedures.

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Annex 1: List of organisations contacted

Member State	Employer organisations	Trade union organisations	National authorities
Austria	Federal Economic Chamber (WKO)	Austrian Trade Union Federation (ÖGB) Chamber of Labour Vienna (AK Wien)	Federal Chancellery (BKA)
Belgium	Federation of Enterprises in Belgium (VBO/FEB) Union of the Middle Classes (UCM) Union of Self-Employed Entrepreneurs (UNIZO)	Confederation of Christian Trade Unions (ACV/CSC) ACV/CSC (Brussels Region) ACV/CSC (Walloon Region) General Confederation of Liberal Trade Unions of Belgium (ACLVB/CGSLB)	Cabinet of the State Secretary for Scientific Policy, Recovery Programme and Strategic Investments
Bulgaria	Bulgarian Industrial Capital Association (BICA) Bulgarian Industrial Association (BIA) Confederation of Employers and Industrialists in Bulgaria (CEIBG) Bulgarian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (BCCI) Union for Private Economic Enterprise (SSIBG)	Confederation of Independent Trade Unions in Bulgaria (CITUB) Confederation of Labour Podkrepa	Ministry of Finance (MF)
Croatia	Croatian Employers' Association (CEA)	Union of Autonomous Trade Unions of Croatia (UATUC) Independent Trade Unions of Croatia (ITUC) Matrix of Croatian Trade Unions (Matrix)	Prime Minister's Office responsible for the implementation of the European Semester
Cyprus	Employers and Industrialists Federation (OEB) Cyprus Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCCI)	Cyprus Workers' Confederation (SEK) Pancyprian Civil Servants' Trade Union (Pasydy) Pancyprian Federation of Labour (PEO) Democratic Labour Federation of Cyprus (DEOK)	Ministry of Finance, Directorate General for Growth
Czechia	Confederation of Industry of the Czech Republic (SP ČR)	Czech-Moravian Confederation of Trade Unions (ČMKOS)	Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs of the Czech Republic (MPSV ČR)
Denmark	Danish Chamber of Commerce (Dansk Erhverv) Confederation of Danish Industry (Dansk Industri)	Danish Trade Union Confederation (FH) Danish Metalworkers' Union (Dansk Metal)	Ministry of Finance, Centre for Climate, Green Economy and the EU
Estonia	Estonian Employers' Confederation (ETKL) Federation of Estonian Engineering Industry Estonian Association of Information Technology and Telecommunications Estonian Association of SMEs Association of Estonian Printing and Packaging Industry	Estonian Trade Union Confederation (EAKL)	Ministry of Finance Government Office Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communication Ministry of Education and Research
Finland	Confederation of Finnish Industries (EK)	Central Organisation of Finnish Trade Unions (SAK) Confederation of Unions for Professional and Managerial Staff in Finland (Akava) Finnish Confederation of Professionals (STTK)	Ministry of Finance

Member State	Employer organisations	Trade union organisations	National authorities
France	Movement of the Enterprises of France (MEDEF) Confederation of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (CPME) Union of Local Businesses (U2P) Union of Employers in the Social and Solidarity Economy (UDES)	French Democratic Confederation of Labour (CFDT) General Confederation of Labour (CGT) Workers' Force (FO)	Ministry of Labour
Germany	German Employers' Association (BDA)	German Trade Union Confederation (DGB)	Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Climate Action (BMWK)
Greece	Hellenic Federation of Enterprises (SEV) Hellenic Confederation of Professionals Craftsmen & Merchants (GSEVEE) Small Enterprises' Institute of the Hellenic Confederation of Professionals, Craftsmen and Merchants (IME GSEVEE)	Greek General Confederation of Labour (GSEE)	
Hungary	National Association of Employers and Entrepreneurs (VOSZ) Employers' group of the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) Confederation of Hungarian Employers and Industrialists (MGYOSZ)	Hungarian Trade Union Confederation (MASZSZ) Democratic Confederation of Free Trade Unions (LIGA) Independent Trade Union of Health Workers (FESZ) National Federation of Workers' Councils (MOSZ) Trade Union of Hungarian Civil Servants and Public Employees (MKKSZ) Social sector, Trade Union of Hungarian Civil Servants and Public Employees (MKKSZ Szociálisok) Hungarian Trade Union Federation of Workers in the Chemical, Energy and Allied Industries (VDSZ) Teachers' Union (PSZ)	Ministry for Regional Development and EU Funds Ministry of Finance
Ireland	Irish Business and Employers Confederation (IBEC)	Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU)	Department of An Taoiseach Department of Public Expenditure and Reform
Italy	Confindustria Confesercenti	Italian General Confederation of Labour (CGIL) Italian Labour Union (UIL)	National Council for Economics and Labour (CNEL) Presidency of the Council of Ministers
Latvia	Employers' Confederation of Latvia (LDDK)	Free Trade Union Confederation of Latvia (LBAS)	Ministry of Welfare of the Republic of Latvia (MoW)
Lithuania	Association Investors' Forum	Lithuanian Trade Union Solidarumas (LPSS) Trade Union Solidarumas of Education and Science	Ministry of Social Security and Labour Ministry of Finance
Luxembourg	Union of Luxembourg Enterprises (UEL)	Independent Luxembourg Trade Union Confederation (OGBL)	Ministry of Economy Ministry of Finance
Malta	Malta Employers' Association (MEA)	General Workers' Union (GWU)	Ministry for Finance and Employment (MFE) Ministry for the Economy, European Funds and Lands
Netherlands	Confederation of Netherlands Industry and Employers (VNO-NCW)	Federation of Dutch Trade Unions (FNV)	Ministry of Finance

Member State	Employer organisations	Trade union organisations	National authorities
Poland	Polish Confederation Lewiatan Employers of Poland (Pracodawcy RP)	All-Poland Alliance of Trade Unions (OPZZ) Independent Self-governing Trade Union Solidarity Trade Unions Forum (FZZ)	Ministry of Development Funds and Regional Policy Ministry of Finance Ministry of Climate and Environment Ministry of Family and Social Policy Ministry of Education and Science
Portugal	Confederation of Portuguese Industry (CIP) Portuguese Trade and Services Confederation (CCP)	General Confederation of Portuguese Workers (CGTP) General Union of Workers (UGT)	Ministry of Labour, Solidarity and Social Security (MTSSS)
Romania	General Union of Romanian Industrialists (UGIR)	National Trade Union Confederation (Cartel ALFA) National Trade Union Confederation Meridian (CSN Meridian) National Confederation of Free Trade Unions of Romania – Brotherhood (CNSLR-Frăția)	Ministry of External Affairs
Slovakia	Federation of Employer Associations (AZZZ SR) Association of Industrial Associations and Transport (APZD)	Confederation of Trade Unions of the Slovak Republic (KOZ SR) Joint Trade Unions of Slovakia (SOS)	Ministry of Finance Office of the Government of the Slovak Republic, National Implementation and Coordination Authority (NICA)
Slovenia	Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Slovenia (GZS) Association of Employers in Craft and Small Business of Slovenia (ZDOPS)	Confederation of Trade Unions of Slovenia (Pergam)	Ministry of Finance (SVRK)
Spain	Spanish Confederation of Employers' Organisations (CEOE)	Workers' Commissions (CCOO)	Ministry of Economic Affairs and Digital Transformation
Sweden	Confederation of Swedish Enterprise (Svenskt Näringsliv)	Swedish Trade Union Confederation (LO) Swedish Confederation of Professional Associations (SACO)	Ministry of Finance Prime Minister's Office, EU Section

Notes: The social partners and national authorities listed provided their views on the topic as part of the preparation of the report. Other organisations were contacted but declined to participate in the study. In many cases, more than one person per organisation was interviewed. In addition, other representatives from tripartite or bipartite social institutions, European Semester Officers and experts were also interviewed.

Annex 2: Network of Eurofound Correspondents

Correspondents who contributed to the study

Country	Correspondent	Organisation
Austria	Bernadette Allinger	Working Life Research Centre (FORBA)
Belgium	Anne Guisset	Research Institute for Work and Society (HIVA), KU Leuven
Bulgaria	Ekaterina Markova	Institute of Philosophy and Sociology, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences (IPS-BAS)
Croatia	Predrag Bejakovic Irena Klemenčić	University of Split University of Zagreb
Cyprus	Pavlos Kalosinatos	Cyprus Labour Institute (INEK-PEO)
Czechia	Sona Veverkova	Research Institute for Labour and Social Affairs
Denmark	Amanda Thor Andersen	Oxford Research A/S
Estonia	Ingel Kadarik	Praxis Centre for Policy Studies
Finland	Amanda Kinnunen	Oxford Research AB
France	Frédéric Turlan	IR Share
Germany	Thilo Janssen	Institute for Economic and Social Research, Hans Boeckler Foundation
Greece	Penny Georgiadou	GSEE Labour Institute
Hungary	Éva Palócz	Kopint-Tárki Institute for Economic Research
Ireland	Andy Pendergast	IRN Publishing
Italy	Barbara De Micheli	Fondazione Brodolini
Latvia	Krišs Karnītis	EPC LTD
Lithuania	Ramunė Guobaitė, Inga Blažienė	Lithuanian Centre for Social Sciences
Luxembourg	Franz Clément	Luxembourg Institute of Socio-Economic Research (LISER)
Malta	Christine Garzia	University of Malta
Netherlands	Thomas de Winter	Panteia
Poland	Agnieszka Górniak, Ewelina Wolosik	Ecorys Polska
Portugal	Reinhard Naumann	Centre for Studies for Social Intervention (CESIS)
Romania	Ștefan Guga	Syndex SRL
Slovakia	Bednárík Rastislav	Institute for Labour and Family Research (IVPR)
Slovenia	Barbara Luzar	Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Ljubljana
Spain	Oscar Molina	Institute for Labour Studies, Autonomous University of Barcelona
Sweden	Nils Brandsma	Oxford Research

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In 2022, the European Semester process was updated to take into account the launch of the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF) in February 2021. Over the past year, Member States have implemented national recovery and resilience plans (RRPs) in a context of huge geopolitical and economic upheaval triggered by Russia's invasion of Ukraine. This report analyses national social partners' involvement in carrying out the reforms and investments included in the RRP. The findings point to a degree of unevenness across Member States in terms of the quality of the social partners' involvement in the preparation of the plans. Reasons cited include insufficient time allotted, inability to provide effective input and lack of genuine consultation and discussion. However, given their key involvement during the COVID-19 crisis – when they rallied together to manage the crisis and mitigate its negative effects – engaging the social partners in the necessary structural reforms is even more critical now due to rising energy and commodity prices, high levels of inflation and the risk of lower economic growth.

The European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (Eurofound) is a tripartite European Union Agency established in 1975. Its role is to provide knowledge in the area of social, employment and work-related policies according to Regulation (EU) 2019/127.

