

# Industrial relations for a green economy

Innovative bargaining processes for a sustainable growth and a quality employment



Project VS/2014/0405 co-founded

by

DGESAI - DG EMPLOYMENT, SOCIAL AFFAIRS and INCLUSION

**FRANCE Case**  
**The French Rubber Recycling Industry.**

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## **The French Rubber Recycling Industry.**

### **Case Study: Recovery of rubber waste, including used tyres, across the entire French industry through consultation and social dialogue.**

Participants involved:

- Companies using rubber in their industrial or manufacturing processes.
- The final owners of tyres
- Local Authorities
- CFDT trade union organization
- Committees of hygiene, safety and working conditions (SHE) of these companies.

### **History : The French situation before the regulation**

Until the early 2000s, the final owners of tyres - essentially garages and auto-centers - were using the collector of their choice and were paying them directly for the collection and recycling of used tyres. These very small collection companies were engaged in fierce competition. Some of these used tyres were used to maintain sheeting in agriculture (silage grass under plastic cover). Eventually, some collectors were no longer finding sufficient financial margins to justify tyre recycling, which resulted in the establishment of illegal dumps, also called "historical stocks" or "orphan stocks", estimated at 110 000 tons per year. Some local authorities (for example the Burgundy Region) were moved to action by this pollution.

To remedy this dangerous situation, the French government introduced Extended Producer Responsibility and asked all those who introduce new tyres on the French market to finance their collection and recycling upstream (a tax on the purchase, during the sale). Since 1 July 2002, it has been forbidden to dispose of tyres in landfills (in rubbish tips). The used tyres are no longer considered as ultimate waste because they have a high potential for recovery, either as raw material or as an alternative fuel.

Aliapur, a limited company, was founded in 2003 by Bridgestone, Continental, Dunlop, Goodyear, Kleber, Michelin and Pirelli, under the principle of extended producer responsibility (EPR). It was created for the implementation of the Decree on the disposal of used tyres, implemented in 2009 in the Code of the Environment, under the environmental obligations of manufacturers and importers of tyres. This system ensures the future of used tyres in France, that is to say, collection from the holders and distributors (garages and auto centres), grouping, sorting, and material or energy recovery. Aliapur carries out its mission based on the tonnage of new tyres placed on the market by its customers in the previous year.

**Now**, with 300 000 tons of scrap tyres collected and recycled every year Aliapur manages 80% of all the used tyres left by consumers in France. This represents the equivalent of 40 million car tyres. However, at first, employees in the sector were not aware of the collection and sorting and the system didn't work perfectly.

Without the intervention of a labour union, CFDT (a French trade union), within the framework of the social dialogue, the system would doubtless have continued to work badly and many tons of waste would have escaped recycling.

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In 2011 the elected CFDT employee representatives (DP) and hygiene, safety and working conditions Committees (SHE) asked their business management concerning treatment of this waste, citing Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). The major companies surveyed were the tyre manufacturers Michelin and Hutchinson, and Gerflor, a manufacturer of synthetic tiles for the building industry. Of the 55,000 employees in the French rubber industry, Michelin have approximately 22,000, Hutchinson about 10,000, and Gerflor 3000.

In 2012, the CFDT, representing more than a quarter of employees in professional elections in the industry, published a questionnaire (a question paper) for companies on the theme: “What do we do with our waste?”

For the companies and employees involved, the question is one of the collection and treatment of waste. Is better recycling possible?

Cement and steel companies were interested in a different source of energy from the coal or oil they had habitually been using in large quantities.

However, the waste, such as used tyres, cannot be used without a first stage of processing / recycling that separates the rubber from the wire mesh structure. The chosen method is to grind the reclaimed rubber into granules for it to be used directly for combustion in cement or steel, or for other industries.

New uses are being developed: Coated athletics tracks, resilient flooring for children’s playgrounds ... and also for paving roads. A percentage of rubber in asphalt mix covering roads makes the coating more elastic. This results in better adherence, which can improve safety, and lower rolling noise, which reduces the noise of roads and highways for the benefit of residents and users, and the environment.

## Summary of development:

- Before, businesses paid to dispose of their waste, choosing the lowest bidder. This competition had generated the irresponsible behaviour of fly-tipping. Today, waste products from the rubber industry are no longer thrown away by hundreds of thousands tons per year in landfills which are often in the open. They are recycled and reused according to the principles of the circular economy.
- A chain of recycling / recovery has grown up, creating many jobs.
- A market for the recovery of waste rubber has opened up. Waste recovery may allow companies not only to stop paying to remove waste, but even to make a profit.
- The recovery of such waste has saved hundreds of thousands of barrels of oil, which is good for France’s trade balance.
- Employees are better informed and aware of waste collection.

Today, waste products from the rubber industry are no longer thrown away by hundreds of thousands of tons per year in landfills which are often in the open. They are recycled and reused according to the principles of the circular economy. The waste has generated an important new market.

It’s a successful example of sustainable development.

**The result is positive for our planet, for the economy, for businesses, for employment and for employees.**

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This example shows that the improvements of the environment, the preservation of our planet, are not in contradiction with the real economy. The green economy is a living reality through the many examples of economic, social and environmental achievements.

This example can convince some economic and policy makers who are still reluctant.

Sustainable development is running. In this development, there are those who take the train and those who do not believe in the journey and stay on the platform.

**But the future is on the train.**