

# Trade unions in Lithuania

Inga Blaziene, Boguslavas Gruzevskis

Florence

23–24 April, 2019



LITHUANIAN  
SOCIAL RESEARCH  
CENTRE

## Trade unions (I)

- ▶ Comparing to other Member States Lithuania can be regarded as country having one of the **least developed systems of industrial relations in the EU**
- ▶ **Trade union membership** in Lithuania in general **is low** and during the last decade it has been steadily decreasing
- ▶ **Trade union density** in Lithuania **is less than 8% (2017)**
- ▶ **Low TU density** is strongly influenced by the absence of social dialogue traditions at both – company and sectoral levels



## Trade unions (II)

According to Lithuanian legislation:

- ▶ A **company-level TU can be set up** where it has at least 20 employees as founders or its founders account for at least 10% of the total employees of the company (provided this is equivalent to 3 or more employees)
- ▶ **WCs should be established** in the companies with 20+ employees, except companies with TUs uniting 1/3 or more employees of the company. (In companies with less than 20 employees workers trustee should be elected).



## Trade unions (III)

The **main national (peak) trade union organisations** (represented at the Tripartite Council) in Lithuania are:

- ▶ **Lithuanian Trade Union Confederation** – has approx. 50,000 members (4.1% of Lithuanian employees), and unites 26 sectorial trade unions
- ▶ **Lithuanian Trade Union ‘Solidarumas’** – has approx. 14,000 members (1% of Lithuanian employees), and unites 19 sectorial and 20 regional trade unions
- ▶ **Lithuanian Trade Union ‘Sandrauga’** – has approx. 10,000 members (0.7 per cent of Lithuanian employees)



## Levels of bargaining

- ▶ According to Lithuanian legislation (from 1 July 2017), **CAs can be concluded** in Lithuania on the following levels:
  - (1) national (cross-sectoral)
  - (2) territorial
  - (3) sectoral (production, services, professional)
  - (4) employer (company) level
  - (5) workplace (plant) level
- ▶ Even though the Labour Code provides possibilities to conclude CAs on different levels, **company-level CAs** are nevertheless **dominant** in practice



## Collective bargaining

- ▶ According to different sources **CB coverage** in Lithuania might be **close to 10%**
- ▶ There are several **reasons of low CB coverage**, however the most important is absence of real sectoral CB (changes since 2018)
- ▶ The **absence of real CB at sectoral level** is determined by several reasons as well differing for public and private sectors (public – strict regulation by the national legislation; state as an employer; private – sectoral mismatch, EOs avoid to assume role of sectoral SP, sign CAs)
- ▶ Consequently – **CAs in general have no great influence** on employment relations and working conditions in Lithuania



## Company level CB

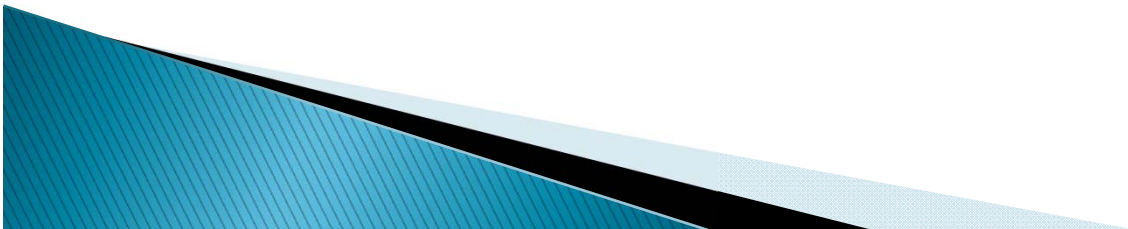
- ▶ Nevertheless, although the extent of CB coverage in general is low, CB usually takes place and CAs are signed **in companies with unionised workers**
- ▶ Before 1 July 2017, CAs in Lithuania were applicable to all employees of the company; after 1 July 2017, **CAs shall apply only to the employees who are the members of signatory TUs.** (A company-level CA may apply to all employees of the company if so agreed by the TU and the employer and approved by the general staff meeting (conference) of the company)
- ▶ In Lithuania, company level CB most frequently takes place **in the public sector and in large and medium** (more often - multinational) **private sector** companies





## Sectoral bargaining

- ▶ There are 3 recently (in end 2017-2019) signed **sectoral collective agreements** in the public sector, covering some remuneration issues, but their implementation is still in progress.
- ▶ Currently **valid sectoral CAs** were signed in:
  - education sector;
  - social work sector;
  - health care sector.





## Extension mechanism


- ▶ **CA extension mechanism exists in Lithuanian legislation –**

According to the Art. 198 of the Labour Code, the application of individual provisions of a national (cross-sectoral), territorial or sectoral (industry, services, professional) CA may be compulsorily extended by order of the Minister of Social Security and Labour to cover all employers in a certain territory or sector if both parties to the CA submit such a proposal in writing –


**however it has been never applied in practice.**



## National level of bargaining

- ▶ Though there are actually no real (having significant impact on social and labour conditions in the country) national level CAs signed in Lithuania (first changes – since end 2018), the main national tripartite social dialogue institution – the **Tripartite Council of the Republic of Lithuania** – plays an important role in the decision-making process in the area of social and working life in Lithuania.
  - ▶ 6 main national EO, 3 peak trade union organisations and 3 ministries (Social Security and Labour, Finance and Economy) are represented at the Council.
  - ▶ According to the valid legislation, all legislative drafts that are submitted to the Parliament on relevant labour, social and economic issues **should be in advance agreed at the Council.**
- 

## Unions' strategies

- ▶ During the crisis TU membership in Lithuania increased, therefore (during crisis and post-crisis) TU strategies were focused **not to attracting members, but to protecting their rights**
  - ▶ Currently TUs' strategies to attract new members are not focused on unions' services (in general **unions' services are weakly developed** in Lithuania)
  - ▶ Moreover TUs' strategies to attract new members **are not designed to attract specific categories of employees** (incl. hi-professional workers or vulnerable dependent workers)
  - ▶ Currently **in attracting new members TU focus on:**
    - large, relatively poor public sectors (nurses, social workers)
    - sectors undergoing restructuring (forestry, energy, road)
    - public "visibility" (debates, actions, mass and social media)
- 

## Unions' services

- ▶ Existing unions' services mainly are limited to rather traditional areas:
  - legal support and consultation (new initiative – mobile TENT)
  - help in drafting, bargaining and signing CAs
  - focus on youth, women, local communities
- ▶ The possible example of innovative unions' services designed to attract individualized (often – hi-professional) workers – **virtual legal consultations** and intention to establish **virtual trade union**

Thank you for attention!

