


**COLLECTIVE BARGAINING AND SOCIAL  
DIALOGUE IN EUROPE**


TO **PROTECT WORKERS' HEALTH  
AND SAFETY AT WORK**  
**AGAINST HEAT  
AND HEAT WAVES**



Adaptation to heat and climate change at work.

Collective bargaining and social dialogue in Europe to protect workers' health and safety, welfare and productivity against heat and heat waves

**PROTECT HEALTH AND SAFETY AT WORK FROM  
HEAT AND HEAT WAVES AND HEATWAVES AT WORK**



1. Climate change is conceived as a public health problem, but NOT as an OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH problem.
2. Workers protection against the risks of climate change is INSUFFICIENT and faces multiple difficulties:
  - Incomplete regulatory frameworks.
  - Lack of reliable sources of information
  - Very heterogeneous measurement systems
  - Prevention measures only available in summer
  - Non-application of existing regulations

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3. What are the implications of this scenario?

Risk of FRAGMENTATION of OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH protection systems.

End of occupational health as a RIGHT of all workers?

UNCERTAINTY regarding the implementation of protective measures.

Can COLLECTIVE BARGAINING correct this lack of definition?

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4. In all the countries analysed → there is FORMAL recognition of the right of workers to participate in the design and implementation of occupational health policies.

Positive effects → collective bargaining makes it possible to ADAPT the GENERAL content of regulations to the SPECIFIC and CHANGING needs of companies/industries.

This function, however, IS NOT BEING FULFILLED properly.

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5. We are confronted with:

- Approval of occupational health policies without real negotiation processes with trade union representatives.
- Companies' preference for the establishment of NON-BINDING SOCIAL DIALOGUE AGREEMENTS.
- Refusal to incorporate the content of such agreements into COLLECTIVE AGREEMENTS
- INEQUALITY in health protection → signing of agreements strongly conditioned by TRADE UNION PRESENCE

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6. Presence of heatwave protection measures in traditional collective bargaining = LOW.

For example:

In Spain: out of 26,887 registered agreements (2010-2023) only 69 (0.3%) incorporated some reference to heat.

In the Netherlands: out of 1,100 collective agreements in force (2023) only 35 (3%) made reference to heat.

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7. Poor content and limited scope of the (few) measures in collective bargaining.

- Companies promote protocols that can be applied flexibly.

Example → no automatic activation of measures based on temperature thresholds.

- Companies refuse to apply measures that entail an economic cost.

Example → suspension of activity due to high temperatures is exceptional.

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8. Faced with these difficulties → social actors explore other mechanisms of social dialogue.

For example:

- Company action plans against heat (Spain).
- Occupational and Security Health catalogues (Netherlands)

Positive dimensions, but also important limitations.

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9. The protection of workers against the risks of high temperatures requires:

- Having detailed (enforceable) norms and standards → that do not depend on power relations.
- Ensuring that existing regulations are REALLY enforced → trade union monitoring and labour inspection.

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Thank you very much for your  
attention

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+ INFO ADAPTHEAT PROJECT



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