



**TRANSFER**

Turning the Atm sector into a Successful  
Example of Replicable social dialogue practices

# NATIONAL REPORT

**BULGARIA**



Co-funded by  
the European Union

Summary .....	3
Introduction .....	5
1. Brief description of the air transport sector in Bulgaria.....	7
2. Working conditions and industrial relations in the air transport sector.....	10
2.1. Key challenges.....	10
2.2 Stakeholders in industrial relations within the sector .....	11
3. Summary of social dialogue in the air transport sector.....	12
3.1. Legal framework.....	12
3.2. Mechanisms.....	13
4. Participation in social dialogue in the air transport sector .....	14
4.1 Coverage .....	14
4.2. Effectiveness .....	15
4.3. Consultation .....	21
4.4. Examples .....	23
4.5. Comparison with other sectors .....	23
4.6. Main obstacles and challenges .....	24
5. Recommendations for improving and better implementing employee participation mechanisms in air transport .....	25
6. Toolkit for improving social dialogue and enhancing worker participation in company life.....	27

## Summary

This national report, prepared within the framework of the European TRANSFER project, focuses on social dialogue in the civil aviation sector in Bulgaria. It is implemented through a combined framework of general labour law, sector-specific aviation regulations and collective bargaining practices, without there being a dedicated, single piece of legislation.

Despite the formal transposition of European information and consultation requirements, the practical implementation of these mechanisms remains uneven and depends to a significant extent on the size of the company, the level of trade union organisation, and the corporate culture. Social dialogue is most highly developed among the large infrastructure operators and state-owned enterprises in the sector, where well-established trade union structures and collective bargaining agreements are in place.

At the same time, the sector faces a number of challenges, including workers' limited awareness of their rights, low trade union density in some companies (especially among low-cost operators and subcontractors), as well as complexities arising from the transnational nature of the aviation business and the geographical dispersion of the workforce. Consultation procedures are often more informative than genuinely effective, and the use of European mechanisms such as works councils remains limited.

Worker participation mechanisms are most actively applied in the context of restructuring, changes in employment, the introduction of new technologies, and health and safety matters. Although their influence on management decisions is limited, they make a significant contribution to increasing transparency, stabilising industrial relations and preventing conflicts.

Compared to other strategic sectors of the economy, worker participation in aviation is more limited and highly dependent on the individual company, but it is showing a trend of gradual development under the influence of European standards.

The main conclusion emphasises the need for a comprehensive approach to improving social dialogue, which includes strengthening the regulatory framework, expanding the practical application of existing mechanisms, and developing a culture of partnership between the social partners. The

implementation of tools such as codes of good practice, training, enhanced participation procedures and mediation mechanisms can contribute to more effective social dialogue, better protection of workers' rights and increased resilience in the aviation sector in Bulgaria.

## Introduction

In implementing the TRANSFER PROJECT – Making the Air Traffic Management Sector a Successful Example of Shared Social Dialogue Practices – the partners from Italy, Poland, Bulgaria, Romania and Montenegro, with the support of CESI and ATCEUC as associated partners, have set themselves **two main specific objectives:**

1. To transfer the good practices for social dialogue developed so far in the Air Traffic Management (ATM) sector to the other subsectors of civil aviation, i.e., aircraft cabin crew and ground handling. To identify, at the national level, the challenges and opportunities for improvement related to social dialogue as practised in these sectors.
2. To facilitate the transnational and European exchange of experience and practices between the social partners in the civil aviation sector, with a view to gathering and developing recommendations for the European Sectoral Social Dialogue Committee (ESSDC) for civil aviation.

To achieve these objectives, the partners, including the Bulgarian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, conducted **a study** of the national specificities of the legal framework, the size and structure of the civil aviation sector, and the impact of the scale and degree of trade union representation among the companies operating within it.

The study aims to assess the rules and official documents governing social relations in the air transport sector and related sectors, and to identify good practices. It also aims to examine key challenges in the implementation of the European and national legal framework for informing and consulting workers in the civil aviation sector; to assess the level of trust and mutual respect in the partnership between companies; and to evaluate existing internal and/or external mediation and dispute resolution committees.

The survey was conducted in the form of an **online questionnaire**, which aimed to identify the factors that hinder the establishment of information and consultation mechanisms at company level or impede their effective operation.

Based on the results of the survey, this report and a European document summarising the surveys conducted in the participating countries will identify

key challenges in the implementation of the legal framework for informing and consulting workers in the civil aviation subsectors.

# 1. Brief description of the air transport sector in Bulgaria

The air transport sector in Bulgaria is recovering dynamically in the wake of the pandemic, driven by tourism and low-cost airlines. The main international airports (Sofia, Varna, Burgas, Plovdiv) primarily handle passenger traffic, while cargo operations are mainly concentrated at Sofia Airport. Key trends include: modernisation, increased competition from foreign airlines, and the development of regional airports.

## Key characteristics of the sector

There are five international airports in the country, with Sofia serving as the main cargo and passenger hub and handling around 70% of cargo traffic. Other important airports are Varna and Burgas (seasonal) and Plovdiv. Passenger traffic is characterised by a strong seasonal influence, centred on summer (Black Sea) and winter tourism. The market is dominated by low-cost carriers (Ryanair, Wizz Air) and the national airline.

The air transport sector in Bulgaria is developing as part of the single European aviation market and is closely linked to the country's economic development. There is a positive growth trend, supported by Bulgaria's strategic geographical position on the Europe–Asia axis.

In recent years, there has been an increase in air traffic, with overflight traffic over the country rising by around 20% over a five-year period. The structure of flights is similar to that of Europe, with scheduled flights predominating, but the share of charter flights is higher (2024), particularly at Varna (26%) and Burgas (45%) airports, reflecting a strong dependence on the tourism sector.

The market in Bulgaria follows European trends, with a balanced presence of traditional and low-cost airlines. The composition of the aircraft fleet is also similar to that across Europe, with Airbus (58%) and Boeing (38%) aircraft dominating.

At the same time, the sector is facing challenges related to delays in the delivery of new aircraft following the pandemic, which is leading to the extended operation of the existing fleet.

Overall, the 'Transport, storage and postal services' sector (including aviation) accounts for a significant share of GDP (around 5–6% in total for all modes of transport, 2024). Bulgaria is experiencing strong growth in air passenger transport, ranking second in the EU in terms of passenger number growth. According to the latest data, the national carrier Bulgaria Air holds approximately 49% of the market share, followed by other operators.

The share of air transport in Bulgaria's GDP is relatively small compared to road transport, but it is growing thanks to tourism and low-cost carriers. Although its direct contribution is less than 1%, aviation, together with tourism and logistics, supports a significant amount of indirect economic activity and employment.

There are 23,349 non-financial enterprises in the transport, storage and postal services sector in Bulgaria. They account for just over 5% of the total number of enterprises. They employ 160,459 workers (2024) – over 7% of the country's total workforce.

According to the Register of Licensed Airport Operators and Ground Handling and Self-Handling Operators, 33 companies are currently operating in Bulgaria. They are engaged in a variety of activities:

Table 1

<b>Type of activity</b>	<b>Number of companies</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>1. Ground administration and supervision</b>	18	55%
<b>2. Passenger services</b>	9	27%
<b>3. Baggage handling</b>	9	27%
<b>4. Cargo and mail handling</b>	10	30%
<b>5. Aircraft apron handling</b>	15	45%
<b>6. Aircraft servicing</b>	13	39%
<b>7. Aircraft fuelling and oiling services</b>	8	24%
<b>8. Aircraft maintenance</b>	4	12%

<b>9. Flight Operations and Crew Administration</b>	14	42%
<b>10. Ground transport</b>	7	21%
<b>11. On-board catering service</b>	5	15%

Over the 10-year period from 2014 to 2024, the number of passengers served at airports in Bulgaria increased by 45%, from 7,728,612 to 11,222,766, and passenger traffic recovered to some extent from pre-pandemic levels. The highest volume of cargo handled at Bulgarian airports was in 2017 – 34,837 tonnes. Since then, it has gradually decreased to 22,493 tonnes in 2024.

In 2025, the airports in Burgas and Varna collectively recorded an 11% increase in traffic compared to 2024, welcoming a total of 3.7 million passengers and handling over 27,000 aircraft movements operated by 64 Bulgarian and international airlines, which provide charter and scheduled flights to more than 90 destinations in Europe, the Middle East and North Africa.

In 2025, there were 18 air carriers operating in Bulgaria holding a valid Community air operator licence. Passenger services are provided by 11 active air carriers, of which 9 are passenger carriers and 2 are cargo carriers. In 2025, Bulgarian airlines operated 78 aircraft.

The country's aircraft fleet is modern and complies with regulatory requirements. The airlines employ well-trained and experienced pilots and cabin crew.

The sector aims to achieve the following objectives:

- Reduce air traffic management costs by 50%;
- Reduce in-flight carbon dioxide emissions by 10%;
- Triple the capacity of the air traffic management system;
- Improving flight safety.

## 2. Working conditions and industrial relations in the air transport sector

### 2.1. Key challenges

Industrial relations in Bulgaria's air transport sector are shaped by intense competition, the dominance of low-cost carriers, and pandemic-induced shifts in power towards employers, which often result in precarious working conditions and low pay for ground staff. The sector is facing high staff turnover, significant safety risks due to staff shortages, and social challenges.

According to the social partners in the sector, **the key challenges are as follows:**

**Market dynamics** – The sector is characterised by deregulation, liberalisation and the high popularity of low-cost carriers, which has altered the relationship between airport operators and airlines.

**Unfavourable work schedules** – Ground staff often work shifts, including at night and on public holidays, which leads to the accumulation of fatigue and difficulties in their personal lives.

**Stress and pressure** – A high level of responsibility and the need for constant concentration.

**Inadequate protection when working outdoors** – many employees are exposed to extreme weather conditions (cold, heat, wind) without sufficient protection or appropriate equipment.

**Safety risks** – Hazardous situations on board or on the ground due to overwork and staff shortages: workloads are high, and there is often a shortage of staff, which increases stress and the risk of errors.

**Insufficient recognition and low pay** – Despite their responsibilities and physically demanding work, ground staff are often undervalued and receive lower pay in relation to their efforts.

**Lack of social protection** – limited rights and opportunities for development.

**Environmental challenges** – the need to comply with stringent environmental standards.

## 2.2 Stakeholders in industrial relations within the sector

- The Union of Transport Trade Unions in Bulgaria (UTT) was established on 29 March 1990. It comprises 107 trade union organisations with nearly 13,000 members.
- The Federation of Transport Trade Unions within the Confederation of Trade Unions in Bulgaria (KNSB) is an organisation that protects the interests and rights of workers in the transport sector (land, water and air) and its ancillary units. The organisation was established in 2023.
- The Association of Bulgarian Airlines (ABA) is the main industry organisation in Bulgaria, having been established in 2002. It protects the interests of Bulgarian airlines, technical centres and other organisations in the aviation sector. Its members include airlines operating 81% of Bulgaria's passenger and cargo aircraft.
- National Association of Bulgarian Freight Forwarders (NABFF): An organisation that brings together companies engaged in air cargo transport and logistics.
- Association of the Bulgarian Aviation Industry (ABAI): Represents companies operating in the aviation sector before the relevant state bodies and/or organisations on all matters relating to their aviation activities, defending their economic, professional and legal interests.
- Union of International Carriers: Brings together more than 1,200 active transport companies.
- Ministry of Transport and Communications: A state body that regulates air transport in Bulgaria.
- Civil Aviation Administration Directorate General
- State Aviation Operator
- Companies operating in the sector.
- Workers in the sector.

## 3. Summary of social dialogue in the air transport sector

### 3.1. Legal framework

The impact of European Union directives on the national legislative framework governing employee involvement in the management of enterprises in Bulgaria is significant. One of the most significant instruments in this area is Directive 2009/38/EC, which governs the establishment and operation of European Works Councils and the procedure for informing and consulting workers in Community-scale undertakings. Regulation (EC) No 1008/2008 defines market access in air transport and the operating conditions for air carriers. This document ensures a level playing field and fair competition in the sector at EU level.

Industrial relations in the air transport sector are also influenced by **conventions and international standards**, such as the Chicago Convention (ICAO) and ILO conventions (on labour standards).

In Bulgaria, these requirements have been transposed primarily through: the Labour Code, the Act on Informing and Consulting Employees in Multinational Undertakings, and additional secondary legislation and practices concerning social dialogue.

It is important to emphasise that there is no single, dedicated 'law on social dialogue in aviation' – the framework is a **combination of general labour legislation + sector-specific aviation regulations + European law**.

The general framework for social dialogue is set out in **the Labour Code, a key piece of** legislation governing social dialogue in all sectors, including aviation. It defines the following elements: tripartite cooperation (state – employers – trade unions); collective labour bargaining; informing and consulting workers; and the participation of trade unions.

**The Collective Labour Dispute Settlement Act** regulates: collective labour disputes; negotiation procedures; mediation and arbitration; and strikes.

Pursuant **to the Health and Safety at Work Act**, committees and working conditions groups are established, and the participation of workers in safety monitoring is regulated.

**The Act on the Information and Consultation of Employees in Multinational Undertakings** relates to European Works Councils and transnational companies (common in the aviation sector).

**The Civil Aviation Act regulates** aviation activities; licensing and oversight; and personnel requirements.

**The following secondary legislation is important for social dialogue and** plays a key role in the practical implementation of labour and social relations in the aviation sector:

**Ordinance No 4018 of 2005 on the working hours of aviation personnel.** It regulates working hours; rest periods; and crew duty hours.

**Regulations in the aviation sector** – Ordinance No 20 (certification and operation); Ordinances No 37 and No 39; Ordinance H-6 on unmanned systems; ordinances on airport charges and operation. These regulations define working conditions, personnel requirements, and safety.

**Secondary legislation on safety and working conditions** relating to working conditions committees; risk assessment; and worker participation.

### 3.2. Mechanisms

**Collective labour agreements** (CLAs) in the air transport sector in Bulgaria regulate specific conditions such as work schedules, additional remuneration and rest periods for crew members. These agreements are concluded at company level and set out benefits and safe working conditions.

**Trade unions** in the sector participate in negotiations to improve working conditions. Collective labour agreements are drawn up at company level and registered with the relevant regional directorate of the General Labour Inspectorate, in accordance with the requirements of the Labour Code. There is no sectoral collective labour agreement for the air transport sector. As of the beginning of 2026, no information regarding a publicly available, active Collective Labour Agreement (CLA) at the Executive Agency 'General Labour Inspectorate' (EA GLI) has been officially published in a centralised register.

At major international airlines that operate or have staff in Bulgaria, workers may be represented on European **Works Councils**.

**Information and consultation procedures** are implemented in accordance with the Labour Code.

## 4. Participation in social dialogue in the air transport sector

### 4.1 Coverage

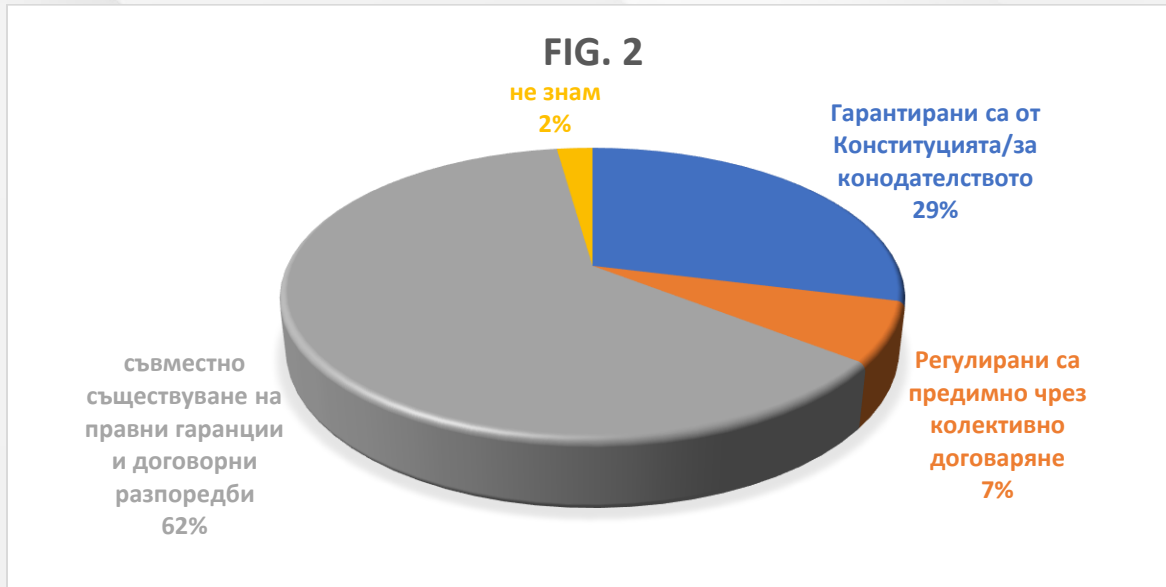
A total of 45 respondents took part in the survey conducted in Bulgaria, with an almost equal distribution between representatives of employers and employees. Fig. 1 shows the participants.

Fig. 1



In terms of age and education, 76% of the respondents are aged 45–54. 17% of them are aged 55–64. 73% hold a master's degree, and 17% hold a bachelor's degree.

62% of the participants believe that trade union rights and their regulation are implemented through a combination of legal guarantees and contractual provisions. For 29%, these rights are guaranteed by legislation (Fig. 2).



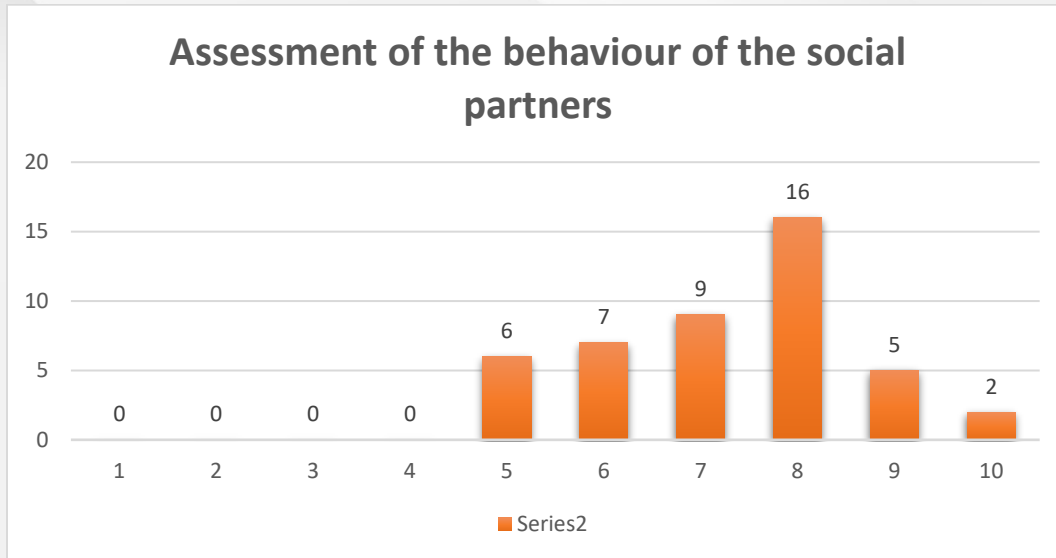
Employers express a positive view (95%) on the existence of a formal, written document (agreement or charter) that formalises the relationship between the company and the social partners, and recommend the adoption of such a formal, written document to regulate relations with trade unions.

71% of trade union representatives believe that establishing a formal, written relationship with the employer could be a topic for discussion in the next round of collective bargaining.

#### 4.2. Effectiveness

Respondents rate the conduct of the social partners in their organisation and country with regard to key behavioural principles on a scale from 1 (not at all) to 10 (fully).

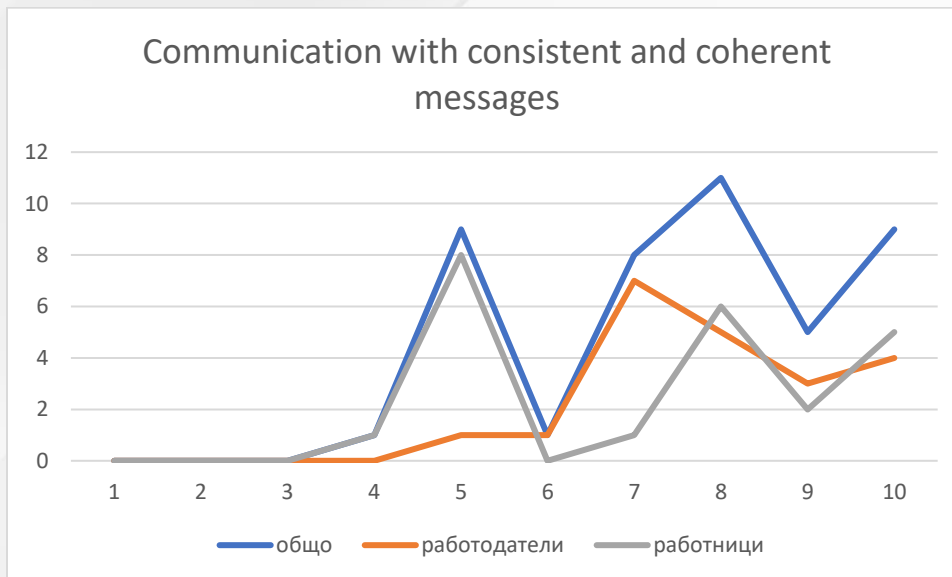
Fig. 3.



It is noteworthy that trade union representatives provide more extreme responses (5; 10). Employers are more moderate: 7; 8.

67.5% of employers recognise the legitimacy and value of the contribution made by trade unions and workers' representatives, respectively, with the majority of responses ranging from 7 to 10.

Fig. 4

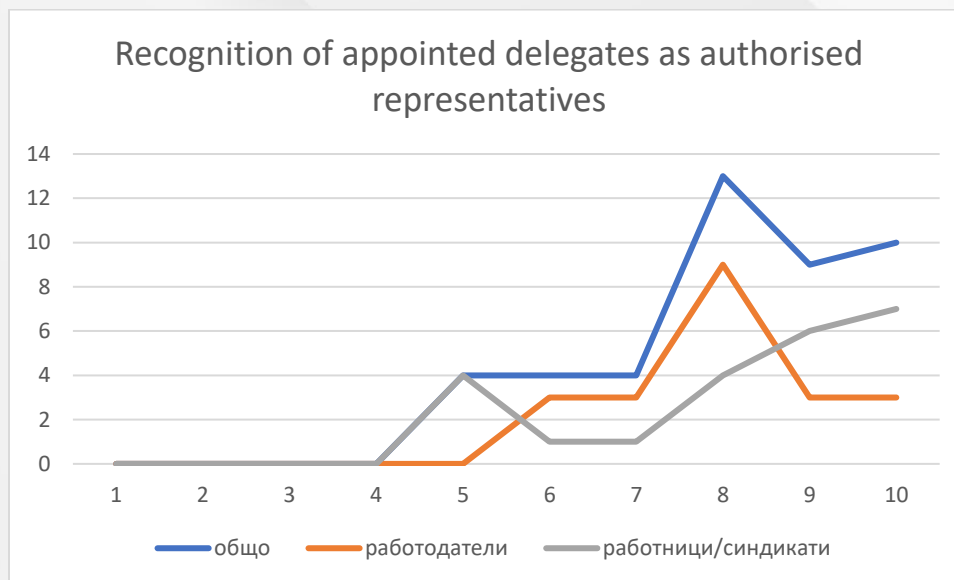


Both sides strive to communicate consistent and coherent messages whenever possible (Fig. 4/.

Both sides value the other's contribution and work together.

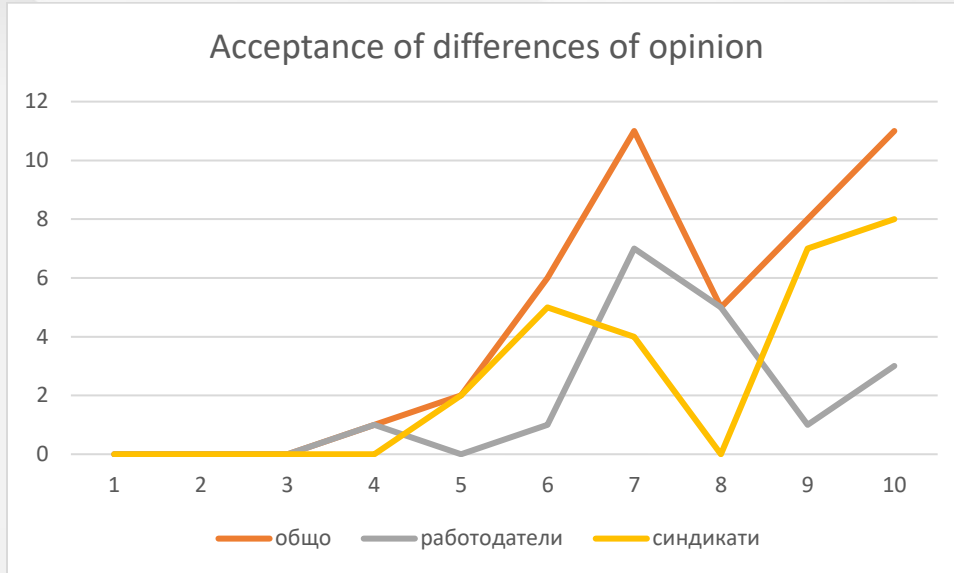
Both parties tend to recognise the appointed delegates as authorised representatives of their organisation.

Fig. 5



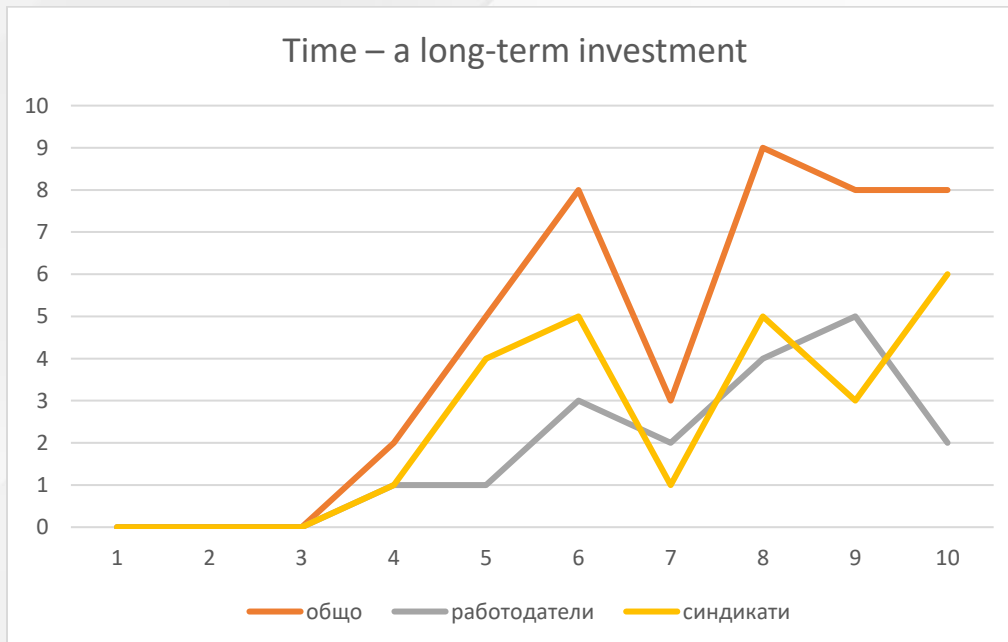
Both parties accept that there may be disagreements, but they understand and know how to use the formal process of business relations (Fig. 6). There are also definitive answers to these questions.

Fig. 6



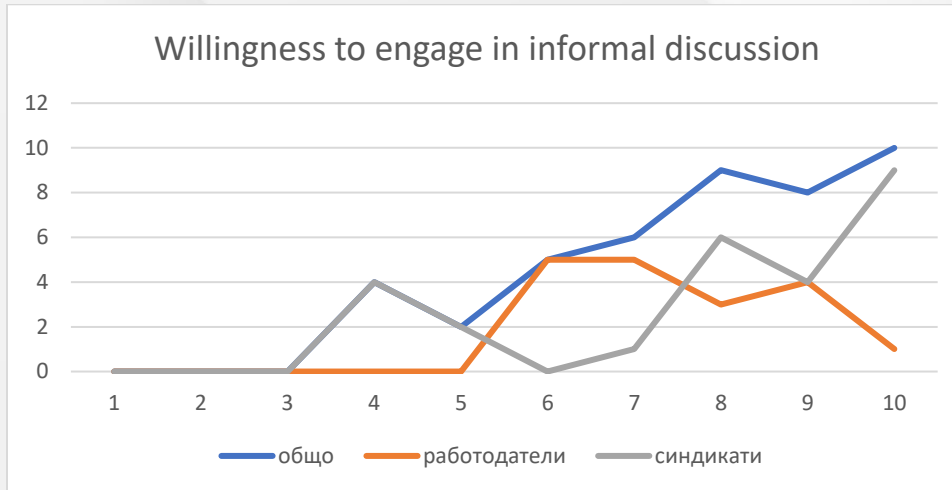
Both sides view the time spent as a long-term investment and take responsibility for the agreements reached (Fig. 7). The responses of the trade union representatives are more negative.

Fig. 7



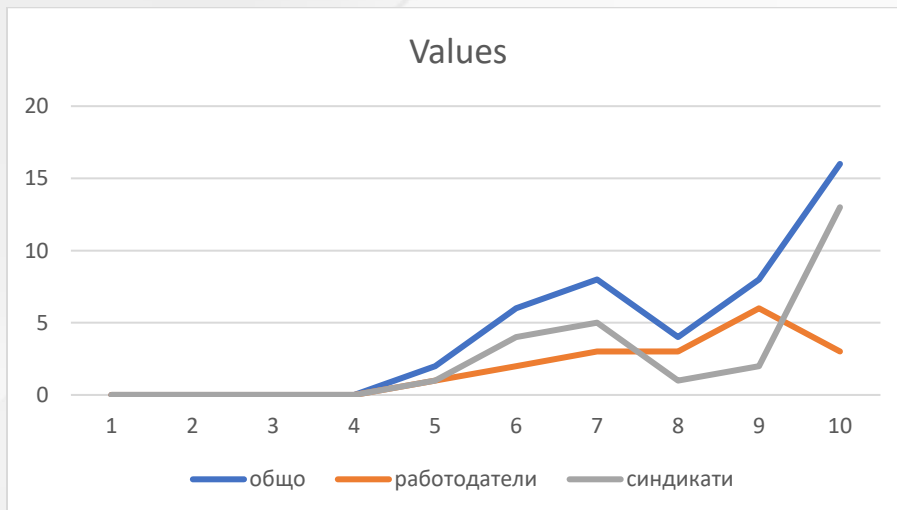
Both sides encourage and are open to informal discussions /Fig. 8/). Workers and trade unions are more inclined towards this type of communication.

Fig. 8



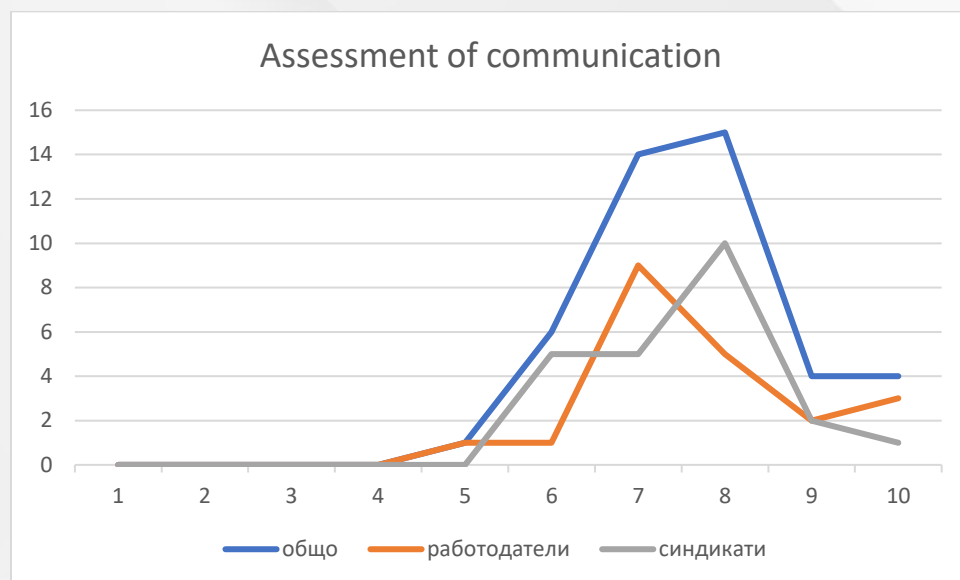
Values such as respect, trust, understanding, openness, loyalty, honesty and cooperation are essential in communication between stakeholders, as shown in Fig. 9.

Fig. 9



68% rate communication as good and very good (7–10) in Fig. 10. However, 93% of the survey participants stated that communication could be improved. 43% of the respondents indicate that the frequency of meetings could be increased; 24% emphasise the quality of the relationships; 14% are of the opinion that the tools used, as well as the topics and issues discussed, could be improved.

Fig. 10



The key tactic or strategy for influence used by the relevant social partner in recent interactions was negotiation, whereby both parties win and reach a compromise – 73%.

60% of respondents assess the chosen strategy as more or less neutral – neither successful nor unsuccessful. Only employers rated it as partially unsuccessful, while 27% rated it as successful. For workers and trade unions, the influence strategy in question is either neutral or mostly successful – 33%.

In the companies that participated in the survey, the existing provisions regarding the information, consultation and negotiation with workers are based primarily on collective labour agreements (38%), on a balanced combination of law and agreements/practices (30%), and on a code of conduct, established practices and national legislation (7% each).

### 4.3. Consultation

In Bulgaria, the mechanisms for **informing and consulting workers** are regulated by the Labour Code and the Act on Informing and Consulting Workers and Employees in Enterprises with a Transnational Structure. These mechanisms are mandatory in **undertakings that exceed certain employment thresholds** (typically over 50 workers for national structures and over 1,000 employees for European Works Councils).

Based on sectoral analyses and social dialogue practices, an approximate estimate can be made:

- **Airport operators and air traffic management:** Around **80–100%** of large enterprises have formal information and consultation procedures, typically implemented through trade unions and collective agreements.
- **Airlines:** Approximately **50–70%** of larger companies have formalised social dialogue structures, but the degree of institutionalisation varies.
- **Ground handling companies and subcontractors:** around **40–60%**, as many of these companies are smaller and do not always meet the statutory thresholds.

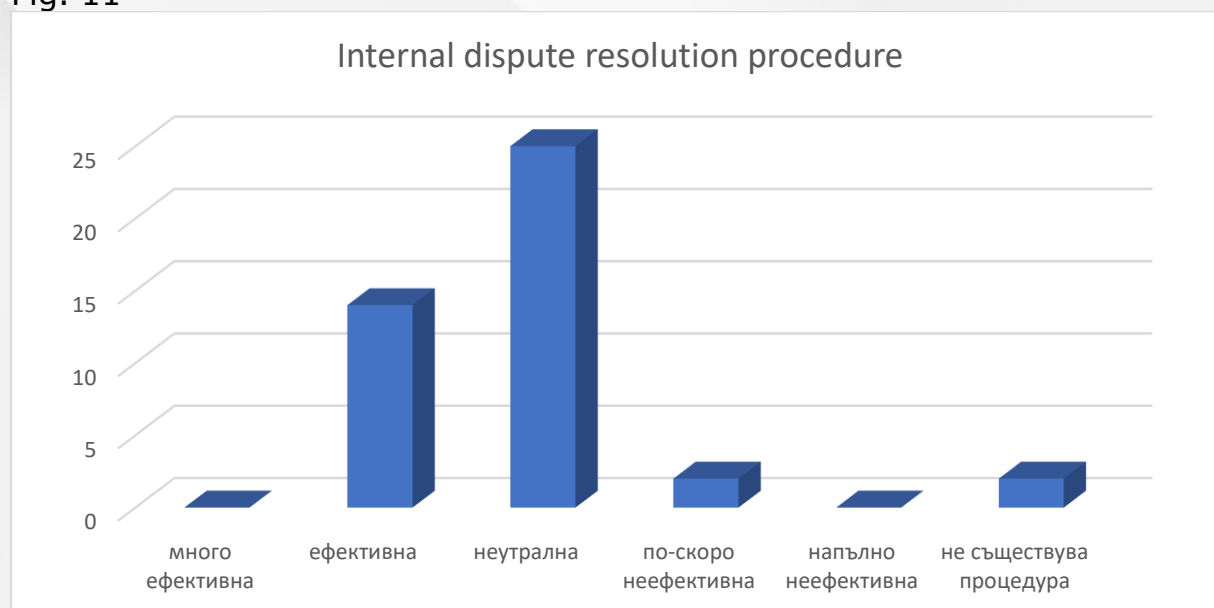
At the national level, agreed consultations are formalised and regulated mainly through a combination of law and agreements – 82%. Explicit procedures are in place in the event that one party believes the agreement has not been complied with by the other – 78%.

67% of respondents report disputes due to non-compliance with agreements over the past 3 years. 73% of them have experienced up to 3 such incidents, while the remainder have experienced more than 3.

95% of survey participants stated that there is a formal dispute resolution/mediation procedure (law, agreement, code) governing industrial relations (relations between the social partners).

This procedure is assessed as neutral – 58% /Fig. 11/. For 33% of the respondents, it is effective.

Fig. 11



**Trade unions generally consider consultations to be insufficient or provided too late.** For their part, **employers** view these mechanisms as a tool for managing industrial relations and preventing conflicts.

In half of the companies, there is an internal dispute resolution committee. Its composition is parity-based – an equal number of representatives from management and from workers/trade unions in all companies. The committee's scope of competence is clearly defined and limited to specific issues (e.g., technical, organisational, social). An official protocol (deadline, rules for submitting documents, etc.) has been established for the committee's preparation of documents and for decisions.

According to 57% of respondents in Bulgaria, there are legal provisions in force and established mechanisms for external dispute resolution in the air transport sector. One third of the respondents skipped this question. 53% believe that decisions/resolutions issued by the external mediator/body are immediately binding on the parties. For 40%, they are binding only if agreed in advance by the parties. According to 72%, there is a right to appeal in the event of disagreement with the outcome of the decision.

The impact of these procedures on management decisions is **moderate**. In large state-owned or infrastructure enterprises, the impact is **more significant**. In private airlines, the impact is often **limited to consultation**, with no real possibility of blocking decisions. Nevertheless, these procedures

have several important effects: improving transparency; reducing labour disputes; and enabling employers to adapt their decisions to take into account social consequences.

#### 4.4. Examples

##### **1. Social dialogue and collective bargaining at Varna Airport and Burgas Airport**

One of the clearest examples of institutionalised social dialogue is that of the operator Fraport Twin Star Airport Management, which manages Varna Airport and Burgas Airport. The company works with trade unions and has signed a **collective labour agreement**, which is renegotiated with the trade unions on a regular basis. Negotiations for a new agreement typically begin before the previous one expires, which indicates a relatively stable mechanism for worker participation.

##### **2. Trade union involvement in the aviation sector**

In Bulgaria, trade union structures associated with the transport sector are involved in: negotiating working conditions; monitoring labour legislation; and participating in working groups and consultative bodies. This is an example of **institutionalised participation**, which helps to inform employees and consult with them in the event of changes in the sector.

##### **3. Protests by employees at Varna and Burgas airports**

In 2025, airport employees staged protests related to: unpaid bonuses; demands for pay rises; and improvements to working conditions. Various categories of workers took part in the protests – ground handling, coordination, technical staff, etc. – with **around 77% of Varna Airport employees supporting the petition**. This case shows that, despite the existing participation mechanisms, consultation does not always prevent labour disputes; sometimes, workers feel that their demands are not addressed effectively enough.

#### 4.5. Comparison with other sectors

The effectiveness of worker participation in the aviation sector in Bulgaria can be compared with that in other key sectors. In industry – for example, in the automotive and machinery sectors – there are often works councils, and formalised consultation procedures have been adopted for restructuring purposes. Compared to the aviation sector, participation is more widespread.

In the banking sector, information and consultation mechanisms are more formalised, and there are clear consultation procedures in the event of restructuring. The reason for this is the strong corporate structure and the more stable regulatory framework. In aviation, processes are more unstable due to market dynamics.

In the public sector, trade unions play a greater institutional role, and consultations are part of the official procedures. Compared with aviation, worker participation is more stable but less flexible.

#### 4.6. Main obstacles and challenges

In the aviation sector, several structural factors limit the effectiveness of worker participation systems.

##### **1. Geographical and organisational fragmentation of the workforce**

The aviation sector comprises: pilots; cabin crew; ground handling staff; technical personnel; and administrative staff. These groups often work at different airports, on shifts, and in an international setting. This makes it difficult to coordinate trade union structures.

##### **2. Labour shortage**

The shortage of suitable domestic labour in certain sectors leads to the recruitment of foreign workers, and engaging in social dialogue with them is hampered by cultural, ethnic and other differences.

##### **3. International nature of airlines**

Many airlines have their headquarters outside Bulgaria and implement corporate policies determined at the international level. This means that decisions are often made at group level and outside national jurisdiction. This diminishes the impact of national consultation mechanisms.

##### **4. Rapid market changes**

Aviation is highly sensitive to economic crises, pandemics, and geopolitical events.

For example, a reduction in air traffic following geopolitical conflicts can lead to financial problems for airports and the need for government support. Such situations require rapid management decisions, which limits the opportunities for consultation.

## **5. Limited trade union representation in some companies**

In some private airlines, trade union organisation is weak, and workers are employed on fixed-term or seasonal contracts. This reduces the effectiveness of the employee participation system.

# **5. Recommendations for improving and better implementing employee participation mechanisms in air transport**

## **1. Improving the regulatory framework in Bulgaria**

Although Bulgarian legislation already transposes the main European requirements, including those of Directive 2009/38/EC, there is scope for better adapting the legal framework to the specific characteristics of the aviation sector.

**For example, the thresholds for worker participation could be adjusted.** The current thresholds for establishing information and consultation bodies (50 employees) do not always reflect the actual structure of the aviation sector. It is recommended that **sector-specific criteria** be introduced, taking into account the total number of employees in the company, rather than only those at a particular base.

**Better regulation of the transnational workforce, which includes:** posted workers; staff based in different countries; and multinational crews. It is recommended that **the rights of posted workers to participate in consultation procedures** be clearly defined.

Legislation could include clearer requirements regarding minimum consultation periods and an obligation to provide **full economic information** when restructuring is under discussion.

## **2. Implementation and dissemination of mechanisms within the sector**

Despite the existing legislative framework, information and consultation procedures are not sufficiently developed at some airlines. **Encouraging the establishment of worker representation can** be achieved through information campaigns, training, and joint initiatives between employers' organisations and trade unions.

### 3. Support for small and medium-sized operators

Smaller companies often lack the administrative capacity to establish formal participation structures. Possible solutions include developing **standardised procedure models** and establishing **sectoral dialogue platforms**.

### 4. Improving the functioning of existing procedures

The effectiveness of participation mechanisms depends not only on the legislation but also on how they are applied in practice. **The main areas for improvement relate to** ensuring that workers receive information sufficiently in advance of a management decision being made, and in a form that allows for genuine consultation.

**Improving the quality of information.** This should include economic analyses, social impact, and possible alternative solutions.

**Greater transparency of the process is recommended** – publication of the main results of the consultations; regular meetings between management and workers' representatives.

**5. Crisis management and enhancing the sector's resilience.** This also includes the establishment of sector-specific crisis response mechanisms.

**6. Green and climate transition:** Ideas and proposals for effectively leveraging worker participation as a key tool to achieve climate change goals and implement the European Green Deal in the sector (e.g., consultations on investments in more efficient fleets, training for new skills related to sustainability, decarbonisation plans for airports).

## **6. Toolkit for improving social dialogue and enhancing worker participation in company life**

### **6.1 Code of Good Practice**

The development and joint signing of a Code of Good Practice by the social partners (employers, trade unions and professional bodies) can be an effective tool for improving social dialogue in the aviation sector.

### **6.2 Mechanisms to improve communication**

In the Bulgarian aviation sector, communication between the social partners is often assessed as good during stable periods, but as insufficient in situations of crisis or restructuring. This can be addressed through specialised training for stakeholder representatives on topics such as: social dialogue techniques; conflict management; collective bargaining; and the development of crisis communication procedures.

### **6.3. Staff training and development**

Workers can participate in the development of training programmes, career development planning, and in raising awareness of health and safety issues.

### **6.4 Sectoral dialogue platform**

This is a digital tool or forum aimed at facilitating communication, cooperation and the exchange of good practices between stakeholders in a specific economic sector. Using a sectoral platform helps to improve social dialogue, monitor activities, and share experiences and potential solutions.

### **6.5 Internal dispute resolution committees**

Internal committees are advisory in nature; they do not issue final and binding decisions, but provide an option for seeking consensus and facilitating the resolution of disputes.

### **6.6 External mediation**

This is a legal option provided for in Bulgarian legislation in the event of collective labour disputes, through institutions such as the National Institute for Conciliation and Arbitration.

Mediation is mainly used in collective labour disputes, for example during collective bargaining negotiations or in disputes concerning working conditions, as well as to prevent strike action.

Improving social dialogue and enhancing workers' participation in it requires a combined approach and the use of a variety of measures and tools.



# TRANSFER

TURNING THE ATM SECTOR INTO A SUCCESSFUL  
EXAMPLE OF REPLICABLE SOCIAL DIALOGUE PRACTICES



*Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only, and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or European Commission. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.*



Co-funded by  
the European Union