



TRANSFER

Turning the ATM sector into a successful
example of replicable social dialogue practices

NATIONAL REPORT

POLAND



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The civil aviation sector in Poland plays a key role in the national economy, acting as one of its main growth drivers, particularly in 2024 and 2025, when Polish airports recorded record growth rates exceeding the European average. This sector generates significant revenue, creates thousands of jobs, and facilitates the development of tourism and foreign trade.

Here are the key aspects of the importance of civil aviation in Poland:

1. IMPACT ON THE ECONOMY (GDP AND JOBS)

- **High contribution to GDP:** The sector (including tourism, airlines and airports) contributes significant value added to Poland's GDP, amounting to 2.5–3% per year.
- **Multiplier effect:** For every PLN 1 million of value added in the aviation industry, an additional PLN 1.8 million is generated in other sectors of the economy.
- **Labour market:** According to IATA, the sector directly employs tens of thousands of people (including in the Aviation Valley) and indirectly supports over 280,000–300,000 jobs across the economy as a whole.
- **Boom in 2025:** In 2025, passenger traffic at Chopin Airport increased by 13%, with 24.1 million passengers handled. Cargo traffic increased by 17%. For comparison, on average across Europe, the number of passengers handled at airports increased by 4.4% and cargo traffic by 3.1%. The total number of passengers carried in Poland reached a record high of 66.3 million. The share of regional airports in passenger traffic is steadily increasing. In 2025, Poland's regional airports handled a total of 63% of all passengers in the country, which translated into a record figure of nearly 42 million people. The remaining 37% of traffic was handled at airports managed directly by Polskie Porty Lotnicze S.A. (primarily Chopin Airport in Warsaw).

a. Aviation industry and manufacturing

- **Aviation Valley:** Poland has a strong aviation cluster in Rzeszów (Aviation Valley), which brings together over 100 companies (manufacturers, MRO – maintenance, repair and overhaul services, research centres). Approximately 30,000 people are employed by all these companies. 30,000 people.

- **Exports:** Poland's aerospace industry is overwhelmingly export-oriented (over 87% of revenues come from abroad).
- **Specialisation:** Poland specialises in the production of engines, components, helicopters, gliders and aeronautical engineering.

b. Infrastructure and transport (airports)

- **The key role of airports:** Polish airports (led by Warsaw Chopin Airport) form the backbone of the transport infrastructure. In 2025, 11 out of 15 airports recorded double-digit increases in the number of passengers handled. Eight airports handled more than 1 million passengers; of the remaining seven, four handled almost 500,000 passengers, and the three smallest handled fewer than 100,000. In 2025, the largest regional airport – Kraków – handled 12 million passengers.

To handle this passenger traffic, airports in Poland employ around 30,000 people.

- **Expansion:** Investments worth tens of billions of zlotys (e.g., the expansion of Chopin Airport, PPL projects) are underway to increase capacity. The construction of the new, large-scale Port Polska airport will be a driving force behind investment in Poland over the next several years.

- **Airlines**

LOT recorded another record year in 2025 – 11.7 million passengers in Poland and 10 new routes. Ryanair served around 19 million passengers, while Wizz Air served 14.5 million. In total, 66 million people used the services of airlines in 2026.

Employment in the airlines was estimated at around 50,000 people.

- Handling agents

LS Services employs 3,500 people. In 2025, they handled 93,000 flight operations and served 11.12 million passengers.

Welcome AS employs 3,000 people across 8 branches. In the same year, they handled over 88,500 flight operations and served over 12,300,000 passengers.

- Aircraft mechanical maintenance – LOT AMS and LS Technics employ over 2,200 people.
- Polska Agencja Żeglugi Powietrznej employs approximately 2,200 people, 600 of whom are air traffic controllers.

c. Strategic importance and security

- **Support for defence:** The aviation industry in Poland cooperates closely with the defence sector, working on dual-use technologies.
- **Connectivity:** Aviation provides fast international connectivity, which is crucial for foreign investors.

d. Challenges

Despite its dynamic growth, the industry faces challenges such as:

- **Staff shortages and supply-side constraints** (aircraft availability).
- **The need to invest in cybersecurity.**
- **High operating and environmental costs.**
- **Decarbonisation and energy transition**

In summary, civil aviation in Poland is not only a means of transport, but also an advanced industry and a key contributor to GDP, which, following the pandemic crisis (2020), has more than recovered, becoming one of the fastest-growing sectors in Europe. There is no doubt that enabling rapid long-distance travel contributes to the development of tourism worldwide and, consequently, to the growth of a tourism industry that generates significant profits and creates new jobs. Without air transport, this would not be possible.

2. WORKING CONDITIONS AND LABOUR RELATIONS IN THE AIR TRANSPORT SECTOR

2.1 Workforce structure in the sector:

There are significant differences in the forms of staff employment across the various industry subsectors. Employment data are not publicly available in all cases, so some calculations are estimates and may be subject to minor errors; they are as follows:

- Airports offer employees the most stable forms of employment. Approximately 90% of ground staff are employed on full-time, permanent contracts. Approximately 8% of employees work on B2B contracts, and only 2% on contract-for-work agreements.
- Over time, airlines have changed their employment profile. At PLL LOT, until 2014, the vast majority of the crew worked full-time on permanent contracts. From that date onwards, the focus shifted to employment through a subsidiary – initially Lotnik 1 and later CREW – on the basis of B2B contracts. Currently, around 80% of pilots, as well as cabin crew employed by CREW CABIN, are employed on these terms. Full-time employment mainly applies to office staff employed by LOT and to some ground staff. Following LOT's example, from 2019, Ryanair switched to self-employment arrangements, and today, similarly, around 80% of its staff are employed by the subsidiary BUZZ. Wizz Air has adopted a different employment strategy. Employees are employed directly by the Polish branch of the Hungarian company, but under Hungarian labour law.
- Handling agents – LS Services, Welcome – mainly use contracts for services for:
 - Persons starting employment
 - young people up to the age of 26
 - for seasonal work
 In other cases, the most common form of employment is a permanent employment contract – it was not possible to obtain percentage information on employment profiles.

- LOT Aircraft Maintenance Services – a provider of technical services in Central and Eastern Europe – offers stable forms of employment to recruit full-time technical staff.

According to the information obtained, only LOT AMS employs cross-border and migrant workers.

2.2 Overall assessment of working conditions:

The air transport sector offers varying working hours and remuneration depending on employers' needs. All possible working time patterns are found in this sector.

Thus, at airports, one of the working-time systems is the basic eight-hour system, often with the addition of flexible start and end times. The most common system for on-call duties is the 12/24/12/48 system, while the Airport Fire Service uses a 24/72 system. A task-based system is used for managerial positions, and remote working is also possible.

At airlines, in addition to the basic eight-hour system, there is a system for cabin crew based on a minimum salary and an allowance, which forms the basis for remuneration depending on the number of flight hours. Aircraft crews try to fulfil their flight hours at all costs, often reporting for work in poor health. Scheduling short but frequent air routes often leads to crew fatigue and affects flight safety.

Handling agents offer their employees theoretically equivalent working hours. Unfortunately, starting work in the early hours of the morning, for example at 3 a.m., and finishing work late at night, as well as the frequent use of split shifts, mean that staff turnover in these roles is probably the highest in the entire aviation sector. This is often hard physical work, which, combined with such working hours, results in employees being permanently overworked.

LOT AMS also has its own specific working time systems. Some employees work the standard 8-hour day, while mechanics and technical staff work a 3-shift, 8-hour system. In addition, working hours under this system can be extended to 12 hours a day, so employees must be prepared for a high degree of flexibility in their working hours, depending on the employer's needs.

2.3 Overview of industrial relations in the sector:

Social partners:

- Trade unions

There is no doubt that, given the legal and social framework, trade unions are the most important partner in dialogue and negotiations, capable of standing up to employers when they apply unfair rules regarding the participation of staff in the distribution of profits generated by their work.

Unfortunately, the percentage of trade union members has been steadily declining since 2014. Also working to the detriment of these organisations is the fact that they operate in a highly dispersed manner and mainly deal with the situation in their own workplaces, generally providing no support, or only minimal support, to employees in other subsectors of the aviation industry. The only forum in which trade unions could support each other in their activities – the Trilateral Team for Air Transport and Airport Services – operating under the Ministry of Infrastructure, has been suspended since 2022, and a request to reactivate it, addressed to State Secretary Maciej Lask, has not been granted. Air Transport and Airport Services – operating under the Ministry of Infrastructure – has been suspended since 2022, and a request to the Secretary of State, Maciej Lask, to reactivate it has not been granted.

At airports, the highest unionisation rate, at around 40%, and therefore the greatest negotiating power, is held by the unions affiliated to the following central organisations: Ogólnopolskie Porozumienie Związków Zawodowych, Forum Związków Zawodowych and NSZZ Solidarność. Overall, at Fryderyk Chopin Airport, At Fryderyk Chopin Airport, there are a total of 7 trade union organisations, 3 of which are not affiliated with national umbrella organisations.

At LOT Polish Airlines, aircraft crews are members of the Forum of Trade Unions, as well as the All-Poland Alliance of Trade Unions (OPZZ) and the Independent Self-Governing Trade Union 'Solidarność' (NSZZ Solidarność). Overall, there are 5 trade unions operating at LOT Polish Airlines, two of which are not affiliated with any national umbrella organisations. Trade union membership is not officially reported, but it is likely to be below 25%.

Wizz Air and Ryanair effectively discourage the formation of trade unions on their premises. As of today, nothing is known about trade union activity at these airlines.

Trade union representation is also not particularly strong at handling companies. At LS Services, there is one trade union affiliated with the OPZZ, while at Wellcome, there is one trade union, NSZZ Solidarność. However, it is difficult to ascertain how representative these organisations are and how many members they have.

At LOTAMS, there is one trade union affiliated with the OPZZ.

- Employers' organisations generally do not participate in social dialogue at the workplace level. The bodies where they can assist in dialogue and in resolving any issues are the Provincial Social Dialogue Council and the Social Dialogue Council. This is an organisation established by law, bringing together trade unions, employers' organisations, and representatives of the government and public administration, whose task is to reach agreements and formulate positions on difficult issues requiring social dialogue and mediation.

2.4 Current trends and challenges:

Changes in employment relations are systematically becoming more pronounced – particularly within airlines. The vast majority of cabin crew are employed on B2B contracts. These contracts are civil law agreements between two companies, under which a self-employed person provides services to the contracting party instead of being an employee.

The advantages of this type of contract include: the possibility of deducting tax-deductible expenses, preferential forms of taxation, often a higher net pay, and greater freedom in shaping the relationship.

The disadvantages are: having to pay social security contributions and taxes (personal income tax/VAT) independently, no paid leave, no protection against dismissal, and full financial liability for damages.

It should be noted that, under this arrangement, it is difficult to organise in the form of trade unions, and the attempts currently being made to establish such organisations show that their scope of operation is significantly limited in terms of the issues that can be negotiated. The provisions of the Labour Code also do not apply to self-employed persons, so they must themselves ensure that their contract includes, for example, a notice period or rules for arranging time off work.

The practice of discouraging the establishment of trade union activities still exists among some companies in the aviation sector. At some airlines and handling companies, trade unions either do not exist or are so weak that it is difficult to determine the percentage of their membership.

The trend of replacing employment contracts with other forms of employment is steadily increasing. Changes to work schedules that are unfavourable to employees – intermittent work, starting work at a very early hour or finishing at a very late hour, or even work on a contract basis – lead to excessive staff turnover, which is a highly undesirable and costly phenomenon.

3. BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE NATIONAL SYSTEM OF EMPLOYEE PARTICIPATION (IN THE AIR TRANSPORT SECTOR)

In April 2006, two years after Poland's accession to the European Union, the Act on Informing and Consulting Workers was introduced in the country. The provisions of the Act implemented the requirements of Directive 2002/14/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 March 2002 establishing a general framework for informing and consulting workers in the European Community.

Unfortunately, in practice, it has become apparent that certain provisions of this Act duplicate those of the 1991 Trade Unions Act. Furthermore, it was found that the Act on Informing and Consulting Workers has significantly less legal force than the Trade Unions Act.

The full text of the provision from the aforementioned Act is presented below:

Article 16. 1. The Works Council and the persons referred to in Article 15 are obliged not to disclose information obtained in connection with their duties that constitutes a trade secret of the undertaking, in respect of which the employer has stipulated an obligation to maintain confidentiality. The obligation not to disclose the information obtained shall also apply after the termination of the function, but for no longer than a period of 3 years.

2. In particularly justified cases, the Employer may withhold from the Works Council information the disclosure of which could, according to objective criteria, seriously disrupt the operations of the undertaking or establishment to which it relates, or expose it to significant harm.

This meant that, if the Employer deemed it appropriate to inform the Works Council, it prohibited the disclosure of any information to external parties on the grounds that such information could disrupt the company's operations, thereby rendering informing and consulting employees a mere formality. This meant that, while the Employer deemed it appropriate to inform the Works Council, it prohibited the disclosure of any information externally on the grounds that such information could disrupt the company's operations, thereby rendering information and consultation with employees a mere formality.

In light of the above, the following provision from the next article is relevant:

Article 17. 1. The Employer may not, without the consent of the Works Council, give notice of termination or terminate the employment relationship with an employee who is a member of the Works Council during the period of that employee's membership of the Works Council.

It seemed completely frivolous and unnecessary – after all, no one could inform anyone anyway, so what penalties could be imposed on Works Council members?

Consequently, after a short period of time, the elected members of the Works Council became completely anonymous and unknown to all the employees who had elected them.

By way of comparison, failure to provide information to trade unions within a specified period results in the trade unions entering into a collective dispute, which may directly lead to a strike and other actions provided for by law. It is the trade unions that, on their own responsibility, decide what information they can provide to the workforce.

It should also be noted that, although the Act on Informing and Consulting Workers formally came into effect in the air transport sector, the Act on European Works Councils – also from 2002 – has not been implemented. The reason for this situation is that companies in the aviation sector do not have a supranational character, and therefore the Act does not apply to them. There is no information on the functioning of the EWC at Wizz Air, and the information available regarding Ryanair is fragmentary and uncertain.

4. EMPLOYEE PARTICIPATION IN PRACTICE IN THE AIR TRANSPORT SECTOR

In Poland, employee participation is facilitated by a number of highly developed and detailed legal instruments, including:

Konstytucja Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej – kluczowe aspekty.

The Constitution of the Republic of Poland guarantees the right to participate in trade unions, recognising them as the foundation of civil liberties and workers' rights, and ensures:

- Freedom of association (Article 59(1)): (1): The Constitution guarantees the freedom to form and operate trade unions and employers' organisations.
- Right to strike (Article 59(3)): (3): Trade unions have the right to organise workers' strikes and other forms of defending their rights, and any restrictions in this regard may arise only from statute.
- Voluntary nature and independence (Article 12): The State guarantees the freedom to form trade unions that are independent of employers, state administration and local government.
- Protection of labour rights (Article 59(2)): (2): Trade unions represent and defend the professional and social rights and interests of their members.

Trade unions – operate on the basis of the Trade Unions Act of 23 May 1991, as amended.

The powers of trade unions with regard to consultation and agreement-making are very broad, and the scope of their competences and the information they can obtain in this respect exceeds that of works councils. Below are some of the rights set out in the Act:

Article 19. [Powers of a representative trade union organisation]

1. A trade union organisation that is representative within the meaning of the Act on the Social Dialogue Council has the right to issue opinions on the principles and drafts of legal acts within the scope of the tasks of trade unions. This does not apply to draft budget laws, the provision of opinions on which is governed by separate provisions.

2. Government and administrative bodies, as well as local government bodies, shall submit the proposals or draft legal acts referred to in paragraph 1 to the relevant statutory bodies of the trade union, specifying a time limit for the submission of an opinion, which may not, however, be less than 30 days. 1, to the relevant statutory bodies of the trade union, specifying a time limit for submitting an opinion, which shall not, however, be less than 30 days. This period may be reduced to 21 days on grounds of overriding public interest. Reducing the time limit requires specific justification. The time limit for submitting an opinion shall run from the next working day, excluding Saturdays, following the date on which the proposals or draft are submitted, together with information specifying the time limit for submitting an opinion. Failure to submit an opinion within the specified period shall be deemed a waiver of the right to express an opinion.

3. State authorities and administrative bodies shall submit European Union consultation documents and draft legal acts referred to in paragraph 1 1 shall be sent by state authorities and administration bodies to the appropriate electronic address indicated by the competent statutory body of the Association.

Article 20. [Proposals for the adoption or amendment of a legal act]

1. A trade union organisation that is representative within the meaning of the Act on the Social Dialogue Council has the right to submit proposals for the issuance or amendment of a statute or other legal act in matters falling within the scope of the trade union's tasks. The trade union shall submit requests concerning statutes to members of parliament or to bodies with the right of legislative initiative. In the case of lower-ranking legal acts, requests shall be addressed to the bodies authorised to issue them.

2. The state body to which the request has been addressed is obliged, within 30 days, to present its position to the trade union and, in the event of a negative position, also to provide the reasons for it.

Article 21. [Collective bargaining and collective labour agreements]

1. In accordance with the principles established by separate provisions, trade unions have the right to conduct collective bargaining and to conclude collective labour agreements, as well as other agreements provided for by labour law.

2. In sectors of employment not covered by collective agreements, the regulation of working conditions and remuneration requires consultation with trade unions.

Another act enabling employee participation in decision-making processes is the Act of 24 July 2015 on the Social Dialogue Council and Other Social Dialogue Institutions.

The very first two articles of the Act, reproduced below, attest to its power and significance – in addition to the workers' and employers' sides, there is also a governmental side.

Article 1. 1. The Social Dialogue Council, hereinafter referred to as the 'Council', is hereby established as a forum for tripartite cooperation between the party representing persons engaged in paid work, as referred to in Article 11(1) of the Act of 23 May 1991 on Trade Unions (Journal of Laws of 2015, item 1881, and of 2018, item 1881). U. z 2015 r. poz. 1881 and of 2018, item 1608), hereinafter referred to as the 'employees' party', the employers' party referred to in Article 11(2) of the same Act, and the government party, hereinafter referred to as the 'Council parties'.

2. The Council conducts dialogue with the aim of ensuring the conditions for socio-economic development and enhancing the competitiveness of the Polish economy and social cohesion.

3. The Council works to implement the principles of participation and social solidarity in the field of employment relations.

4. The Council works to improve the quality of the formulation and implementation of socio-economic policies and strategies, as well as to build social consensus around them by conducting a transparent, substantive and regular dialogue between workers' and employers' organisations and the government side.

5. The Council supports the conduct of social dialogue at all levels of local government units.

Article 2. The responsibilities of the Council and its constituent parties include:

- 1) expressing opinions and adopting positions,
- 2) issuing opinions on draft bills and draft legal acts,

- 2a) issuing opinions on draft strategies, draft programmes and drafts of other government documents concerning planned actions of the Council of Ministers, prepared by the Council of Ministers and its members,
- 3) initiating the legislative process in accordance with the principles set out in this Act,
- 4) performing other tasks arising from separate acts – in matters referred to in Article 1.

Another act consolidating the leading role of trade unions in social dialogue, consultation and dispute resolution is the Act of 23 May 1991 on the Settlement of Collective Disputes. Already Article 2 identifies the parties required for the resolution of disputes.

Article 2. [Representatives of the rights and interests of employees and employers]

1. The collective rights and interests of employees referred to in Article 1 shall be represented by trade unions.
2. The rights and interests of employers in collective disputes may be represented by the relevant employers' organisations.

The Act concerns the procedure to be followed in the event of collective disputes between the employer and trade unions. Compliance with all the requirements of this Act ultimately entitles the parties to use a strike as a final argument in collective bargaining.

Given the significance of the aforementioned provisions, the Act on Informing and Consulting Workers appears to be the weakest. Mere consultation and information, which often cannot be provided to anyone, do not in any way affect the operations of undertakings in the air transport sector, nor in other sectors of the economy.

Scope of undertakings: In principle, in all entities within the air transport sector, appropriate provisions have been introduced in accordance with the Act. In all enterprises, employees were entitled to these rights based on size thresholds.

Practical effectiveness: Over time, the initial enthusiasm waned – the duplication of information channels on the social side and the lack of any proactive approach to consultation led to the decline of this form of employee participation in the co-management of the company. At the time of writing this report, asking an employee in the air transport sector about Works Councils would only elicit surprise, even if they formally exist.

Today, it is widely believed that the partner representing the employee side is the trade union, and the vast majority of the questions in the survey related to this situation. However, in the case of trade unions, particularly on the side of handling companies, the questionnaires were also completed by employees who were not members of trade unions. This was due to the difficulty of finding an adequate number of union members in those companies.

Issues and impact of consultation, case studies, reference point:

The Institute of Civil Affairs (Instytut Spraw Obywatelskich) has produced a report entitled '10 lat rad pracowników w Polsce' ('10 Years of Works Councils in Poland').

The following direct quotations from this report are worth mentioning:

'Workers' councils, which were intended to be an innovative tool for shaping civic attitudes in the workplace, were, from the very outset, treated as an imposed institution left to its own devices.' Instead of harnessing the potential of works councils to transform the employer–employee relationship, politicians of all persuasions limited themselves to the formal implementation of the provisions required by Directive 2002/14/EC of the European Parliament. Workers' councils were introduced without any real support – there was a lack of educational, promotional and legislative measures that could have brought them to life and ensured their effectiveness in operation. Without adequate support, the development of these councils remained largely incomplete and lacked the impetus to function effectively.

Trade unions, although they could have cooperated with the works councils, also failed to recognise their potential. The lack of protection for council initiators and their insufficient information-gathering powers meant that councils were perceived as an ineffective tool.

Provisions such as Article 13 of the Act on Works Councils were drafted in an enigmatic manner, which allowed employers to interpret their obligations in a

minimalist way. In practice, this meant that the works councils did not have access to any relevant information beyond that which was publicly available, for example, in reports published by the National Court Register [2]. Employers' reluctance to provide works councils with detailed information stems from their fear of increased scrutiny. Many companies argue that works councils are only entitled to a minimum amount of information, which is already publicly available, thereby limiting their ability to genuinely intervene in the management of the company. Instead of serving as a platform for cooperation, works councils often become merely a symbolic institution, with no real influence on company decisions. "

After another decade, as I wrote earlier, the topic of works councils at most elicits surprise, followed by the question: 'What is that?' Unfortunately, this is the case across the entire air transport sector.

Barriers: The main challenges and barriers that prevent the system of participation from functioning better and becoming more widespread in practice (e.g., the geographical dispersion of the workforce, the complexity of international regulatory frameworks, resistance from management, the pace of market changes).

Workers' councils are institutions that have significant potential to improve the quality of industrial relations in Poland. They enable employees to have a real influence on decisions concerning the workplace, thereby fostering mutual trust between the team and the employer. However, in order for them to function effectively, changes to Polish law and a change in employers' attitudes are necessary. As data from reports show, the Polish management system is largely authoritarian, and company boards are often unwilling to engage in open dialogue with employees.

Effective dialogue requires mutual respect and trust. The survey participants fully agree with this. When asked whether values such as respect, trust, understanding, openness, loyalty, honesty and cooperation are of great importance, 33 out of 40 respondents answered positively, and only 7 stated that they are not of great importance.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVING AND BETTER IMPLEMENTING EMPLOYEE PARTICIPATION MECHANISMS IN AIR TRANSPORT

Streamlining the regulatory framework: It should be recognised that, in order to improve the implementation of participation mechanisms, changes need to be made on two levels:

- In terms of awareness and perception of social dialogue as a useful tool for shaping workplace relations – primarily on the part of employers.
- Amendments to the provisions of the current Act.

With regard to the first point, it should be noted that the Act on Informing and Consulting Employees was introduced without adequate preparation in terms of the objectives underlying the implementation of this directive. The authoritarian style of management in companies is at odds with the principle of ensuring employee participation in decisions concerning their work. In the eyes of employers, this constitutes a sharing of power and decision-making authority. Employers overlook the information-related section of the Act. Meanwhile, in the survey, communication between the employer and the social partner is rated as very poor – between 3 and 4 out of a possible 10 points. Only 4 out of 40 respondents felt that it did not require improvement. Meanwhile, more than half of the respondents considered the quality of the relationship to be of great importance.

The proposed amendments to the provisions will be discussed in the next section.

Implementation and dissemination: To improve the existing legal framework in the air transport sector, a range of educational, promotional and legislative activities should be carried out, targeting employers in particular.

Streamlining existing procedures: After 20 years of the Act on Informing and Consulting Workers being in force, it is time to consider making changes in areas that have effectively hindered the intended development of social dialogue. One of the biggest problems related to works councils in Poland is the 10% threshold for signatures of support – in order to establish a works council, at least 10% of a company's employees must submit a request for its establishment. Meanwhile, in Germany, where works councils are very popular for companies with more than 200 employees, this threshold is just 5 people!

In Poland, this threshold is so high that many employees are afraid to get involved in works council activities, fearing consequences from their employer.

Another problem is the lack of clear provisions on the financing of Works Councils. Currently, the costs of their operation are borne by the employer, which in practice means that the employer decides which of the works council's activities to fund and which not to fund. The lack of an independent budget for Works Councils means that they have no real opportunity to operate independently.

The requirement to ensure a 50% turnout of the employer's employees in companies with several thousand employees is difficult to meet, and repeating the elections after 30 days poses a significant technical challenge and does not facilitate the decision to establish a Works Council.

There needs to be a clear definition of what information can be considered a trade secret – it cannot be the case that even publicly available documents are considered a trade secret for the Works Councils.

Changing the appeal body – referring the Works Council to a general court means being condemned to at least two-year wait for a ruling. By that time, the requested information is already long out of date.

Crisis management (resilience):

Organisational culture – involving employees in the safety management system creates an organisational culture that is resilient to disruptions, which is crucial for long-term success. Employees' active participation in crisis management increases their sense of responsibility for the company's future and reduces resistance to change. However, integrating employees into a participatory system requires considerable effort on the part of the employer and a complete overhaul of the existing way of thinking. Working out solutions together and participating in decision-making enables employees to better understand the risks and strengthens their ability to prepare for and prevent crises.

Green and climate transformation:

Paradoxically, current global developments are having a positive impact on the development of social dialogue, not only at the level of employees and employers, but also at the level of all citizens. The green and climate transition has proven to be a factor in significantly increasing costs for businesses, which are inevitably passed on to citizens. Initially, citizens of the European Union

understood the need for higher spending, but over time, it became apparent that the volume of sales for businesses was falling significantly, leading to closures and, consequently, job losses. Entrepreneurs, who were beginning to face the prospect of bankruptcy, joined the emerging social movements calling for the green transition to be scaled back. The war in Ukraine, and more recently the war in Iran, have led to further cost increases – this time for fuel and gas. At a time like this, planning further expenditure on decarbonisation and introducing additional costs related to the Green Deal could result in an outburst of public discontent. However, even under such conditions, there are measures that citizens can accept. These include, for example, the introduction of zero-emission vehicle fleets in companies with more than 250 employees.

6. 'ZESTAW NARZĘDZI' JAKO NARZĘDZIE USPRAWNIAJĄCE DIALOG SPOŁECZNY I ZWIĘKSZAJĄCE UDZIAŁ PRACOWNIKÓW W ŻYCIU FIRMY.

6.1 Kodeks dobrych praktyk: Ekspert oceni, czy proces wspólnego opracowywania i podpisywania Kodeksu dobrych praktyk jest postrzegany jako skuteczna strategia budowania wzajemnego zaufania i wzmacniania dialogu społecznego opartego na współpracy.

Definition: A Code of Good Practice is a set of principles and guidelines that establish standards of conduct in a particular field or industry. It is a type of ethical code aimed at promoting integrity, responsibility and professionalism in business activities. Kodeks dobrych praktyk ma kluczowe znaczenie dla różnych sektorów i organizacji. It provides a foundation for building trust between companies, customers, employees and other stakeholders. Thanks to a Code of Good Practice, it is possible to avoid unethical practices and to minimise the risk of conflicts and disputes.

Of the 40 people surveyed, 15 are familiar with such a document. Out of the 8 employer representatives who responded, 5 are familiar with the Code of Good Practice, but only 3 would recommend such an approach to other companies. Why is this the case?

In the air transport sector, two types of ownership predominate: state-owned companies, where the Code is imposed from above, and other business entities, which have greater freedom to decide on their structure and the documents required for their operations. As a document imposed from above, it is known to those in managerial positions, but employees in roles below managerial level do not strongly identify with it. In the banking sector, for example, it forms the basis for the functioning of both the institution and its employees. Learning the principles adopted there is a requirement. As an element of employee participation in the air transport sector – due to its top-down structure – it is not easily recognised, as it is difficult to identify any element of dialogue or consultation. The Code of Good Practice is an important tool that helps to build fair and responsible business relationships, and can help to build trust between companies or in employee–customer relations. However, as an element of employee participation in management, it is not a tool of primary importance.

6.2 Perception of communication and social breakdown: How is the current quality of communication and cooperative behaviour between the social partners perceived, in particular by employees and their representatives? Is a communication deficit widely considered to be the main cause of, or a contributing factor to, recent social unrest or conflict in the aviation sector?

Only in 4 cases did the respondents believe that communication between the social partners did not need to be improved, with the highest score being given in just one case. There are 13 ratings between 6 and 10. The vast majority of opinions are negative. Most frequently, in as many as 21 cases, it was considered that trust and openness needed to be improved. Eight respondents felt that the topics and issues addressed in communication did not meet their expectations, while four considered the frequency of meetings to be insufficient.

In the survey, 17 respondents highlighted the need for/urgency of the company's actions, as well as the cohesion and mobilisation of employees. In addition, there were 11 responses concerning reliance on technical/legal data and analyses.

Taking all these responses together, it can be concluded that, in the air transport sector, mutual interaction only begins when there are various types of threats to companies and their employees, and that cooperation between the social partners mainly concerns wage cuts and the elimination of benefits. A notable example in this regard is that of LOT Polish Airlines and Przedsiębiorstwo Porty Lotnicze, around 2019. In both cases, the employer terminated the Collective Labour Agreement, and at that time, announcements from the authoritatively managing CEOs regarding this necessity were a regular occurrence. When the Collective Agreements ceased to exist, employer–employee communication deteriorated dramatically.

Improvement mechanisms and the legal context: What specific mechanisms, training programmes or codes of conduct could be introduced to systematically improve behaviour?

There is no doubt that Poland is one of the European leaders in terms of the number of laws and regulations aimed at ensuring employee participation in the management, consultation and information process. However, with the tacit consent of politicians, the implementation of these objectives is encountering unprecedented difficulties.

The number of companies with Collective Bargaining Agreements in place has dropped to 8%! Allowing employee participation by management is an extremely sensitive topic. The most effective provision for resolving disputes within a company is the 1991 Act on the Settlement of Collective Disputes, which operates through trade unions. The anti-mobbing committees provided for in the Labour Code have, to a large extent, become a tool for delaying the filing of a claim with the Labour Court – indeed, they do not rule on mobbing, but on actions that bear the hallmarks of mobbing – only the Court can determine whether mobbing has occurred. All these phenomena affect not only the air transport sector – they affect every industry and sector in Poland.

Recommendations for streamlining and improving the implementation of employee participation mechanisms in air transport:

It appears that not all parties involved in social dialogue are keeping pace with the growing level of public awareness and the benefits associated with employee participation in the management process.

Employers – a widespread belief in their own infallibility, disregard for the views of the social partners, and a reluctance to share power and information.

Trade unions – exceeding their statutory powers, frequently venturing beyond social and pay-related issues, and a reluctance to share powers.

Government – passing unclear regulations, failing to respond or responding inadequately to reports from social partners, tolerating unlawful behaviour by employers.

These are all areas in urgent need of improvement, and not only in the field of air transport. However, particular emphasis should be placed on educating employers and their management teams. Understanding the positive role of employee participation in co-management, consultation and information will be crucial for the functioning of companies and for enabling them to navigate crises more smoothly.



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TuRning the Atm sector iNto a SuccesFuL
Example of Replicable social dialogue practices



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