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## **PROSPECTS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIAL PARTNERSHIP IN THE LABOR SPHERE**

### **ПЕРСПЕКТИВИ РОЗВИТКУ СОЦІАЛЬНОГО ПАРТНЕРСТВА У СФЕРІ ПРАЦІ**

*This article examines the objective difficulties that hinder the formation of social partnership in the labor sphere in Ukraine as a full-fledged institution of civil society. This study provides a detailed analysis of a set of measures, the implementation of which will allow for a qualitative transition in relations between employees and employers at all levels of social partnership. Currently, social partnership in European countries relies on a well-functioning mechanism of interaction between its participants: employees, entrepreneurs, and the state.*

*The effectiveness of this mechanism is based on an expedient distribution of rights and responsibilities of the parties for the development and implementation of socio-economic policy. Social partnership is a specific ideology, a special vision of the nature of class interaction in a market economy. It is a method of civilized resolution of socio-labor conflicts, designed to guarantee the peaceful evolution of society into a state where contradictions and opposing interests of workers and owners disappear, where there is neither the dictatorship of the employer nor, moreover, the dictatorship of the employees, but rather a social contract and agreement between employees and employers based on the realization of the rights and interests of the parties.*

**Keywords:** *social partnership, social mechanism, personnel, workers, cooperation.*

*У статті розглядаються об'єктивні труднощі, що перешкоджають формуванню соціального партнерства у сфері праці в Україні як повноцінного інституту громадянського суспільства. У дослідженні наведено детальний аналіз комплексу заходів, реалізація яких дозволить здійснити якісний перехід у відносинах між працівниками та роботодавцями на всіх рівнях соціального партнерства. Нині соціальне партнерство в європейських країнах спирається на налагоджений механізм взаємодії між його учасниками: працівниками, підприємцями та державою.*

*Ефективність цього механізму ґрунтується на доцільному розподілі прав та обов'язків сторін щодо розроблення та реалізації соціально-економічної політики. Соціальне партнерство є специфічною ідеологією, особливим баченням природи класової взаємодії в умовах ринкової економіки. Це метод цивілізованого розв'язання соціально-трудових конфліктів, покликаний гарантувати мирну еволюцію суспільства до стану, в якому зникають суперечності та протилежні інтереси працівників і власників, де немає ні диктатури роботодавця, ані тим більше диктатури працівників, а натомість існує суспільний договір та угода між працівниками й роботодавцями на основі реалізації прав та інтересів сторін.*

**Ключові слова:** *соціальне партнерство, соціальний механізм, персонал, працівники, співробітництво.*

Problem Statement. For the full-scale functioning of a market economy, it is essential to have a fully developed civil society with all its institutions. Social partnership in the labor sphere is an inherent attribute of a developed civil society, which, in turn, is designed to improve interaction between employees and employers, as well as to ensure and protect their rights and interests. Currently, issues regarding population employment and wage growth are particularly acute. Labor legislation provides a legal definition of this concept,

according to which social partnership in the labor sphere is a system of relationships between employees, employers, state authorities, and local self-government bodies, aimed at ensuring the coordination of interests between employees and employers on matters of labor relations regulation and other directly related relations [1].

The purpose of the article is to analyze the development prospects of social partnership in the labor sphere.

Analysis of recent research and publications. Scientific developments by Ukrainian scholars in the labor sphere are of great importance for our work [1-7]

Main Body. In practice, social partnership relations are essential for improving interaction between employers and employees regarding wage indexation, the provision of social guarantees, and much more. The parties to a social partnership are the employees and their representatives (trade unions), while their counterparts are employers and their representative associations. Additionally, government authorities may participate in labor-related social partnerships when interaction occurs at the state level [2].

It should be noted that resolving issues within labor social partnerships lies in the broader scope of general economic development and the strengthening of a full-fledged civil society. Essentially, social partnership in the workplace is an asset and even a privilege of a developed social organism. It is a category of a mature market economy characterized by the institutionalization of social partners. This mechanism can only function effectively under conditions of a stable market and a steady society.

When addressing the challenges of social partnership in labor, it is necessary to begin by creating the requisite economic and social conditions. It is worth noting that, according to many financial and economic analysts, the world is currently entering an era of serious economic crisis. This creates significant obstacles to reforming social partnerships in the labor sector [1].

The culture of social partnership emerged relatively recently. In the post-Soviet reality of our state, the government remained the primary actor in social partnership. Given the difficult socio-economic situation of the 1990s, it was not possible to form a full-fledged civil society with well-developed institutions,

such as labor social partnerships. It was during this period that the culture of social partnership, with all its inherent problems and attributes, began to take shape.

The first such problem is the lack of strong trade unions. Practice shows that existing unions are either overtly weak and unable to fully protect workers' interests or adopt strictly conformist positions. Actions organized by unions generally do not lead to radical changes in the interaction between employees and employers. Furthermore, protest actions are actually perceived by society as something exceptional. It is a different story in France, where multi-million-person rallies are not uncommon. For instance, French unions have threatened to bring the economy to a standstill; in late March 2023, an indefinite strike by nuclear power plant employees began, which could lead to dire consequences for French industry [7].

It should also be noted that the weak positions of unions at various levels in Ukraine make them incapable of fully defending workers' rights. Ill-conceived reorganizations—such as the merging of union organizations—frequently result in unions losing contact with rank-and-order members and local structures.

The second problem is that for the majority of workers, concepts such as civil society, the rule of law, and legal culture remain illusory rather than real. This is primarily expressed in a low level of legal culture and civic consciousness. Most citizens rely on state structures or third parties for protection rather than on themselves. This, in turn, indicates the factual absence of a civil society in the country. If civil society is merely a formal declaration existing only on paper, it is impossible to speak of a genuine social partnership. The development of this institution abroad shows that the evolution of civil society and the establishment of social-labor relations through social partnership are entirely interdependent and complementary [5].

The third issue is that social partnership, as a tool for regulating labor relations, must be based on parties of equal strength. This refers to the equal ability to withstand the opposing side when conflicts arise. The fourth problem is the flawed mechanism for implementing contract terms. It is worth noting that any commissions are merely advisory bodies and lack the tools to enforce

agreements. For instance, in bilateral or trilateral negotiations, unions demand wage increases while employers argue that financial difficulties make raises impossible. The resulting compromises usually satisfy neither side.

The fifth problem lies in a weak legal framework. Conflicts between employees and employers are frequent. For example, during periods of economic growth, companies spend funds on dividends and new assets, keeping wage increases just above inflation. However, during downturns, entrepreneurs shift the responsibility for workers onto the state. It is important to understand that even if labor productivity increases, employer behavior is unlikely to change. The state's primary focus in developing social partnership is shifting the responsibility for social issues onto business due to a deficit of public resources [6].

To carry out a full reform of the social partnership system, a set of measures must be implemented. First, it is necessary to improve legislation and enforcement tools. Priority should be given to enhancing oversight mechanisms for compliance with social partnership laws. Neglecting this leads to violations of workers' rights and damages relations between employers and unions. It is also crucial to refine legislation regarding collective labor disputes. Currently, dispute resolution procedures are complex and time-consuming, often fueling further conflict. Resolving labor disputes must become faster and simpler.

It should be noted that there is a need to strengthen accountability for violations of social partnership legislation. Inadequate penalties for violating workers' rights and failing to comply with legal norms lead to repeat offenses and negatively impact relations between the parties involved. Overall, refining the legal framework and enforcement mechanisms is a vital step toward improving relations between employers and trade unions, ensuring workers' rights, and creating a favorable work environment. The development of social partnership is a key factor for the sustainable development of both the economy and society as a whole [4].

Secondly, it is necessary to implement a set of measures aimed at raising the status of social partnership bodies at the state level. Elevating their status allows these bodies to participate more effectively in drafting legislation

concerning labor relations, civil rights protection, and business development. This contributes to higher-quality legislation and improved working and living conditions for citizens. Thus, raising the status of social partnership bodies is a crucial step for development in Ukraine. It will enhance cooperation between employers, employees, and the state, leading to better legal standards and a higher quality of life.

Thirdly, the development of social partnership should occur not only at the state level but also at other levels. For example, interregional social partnership—cooperation between employers, employees, and the state across regions—has gained significant importance in recent years. It serves as a vital tool for economic and social growth, fostering fair working conditions and improving quality of life. Therefore, it should be a priority in state labor and social protection policy.

Fourthly, it is essential to recognize lower levels, such as the territorial level (municipal). This involves collaboration between local authorities, employers, and employees to resolve labor issues and support entrepreneurship. This level is crucial as it represents direct interaction between parties, embodying civil society in action and addressing workers' problems at their source [2].

First, it allows for more accurate consideration of the specifics of each region and municipality. Second, it enables problem-solving at the local level, which is more efficient and prompter. Third, it promotes the development of civil society locally and increases trust between employers, employees, and local authorities.

Developing the territorial level of the social partnership system is a key government policy in labor relations and social protection. It helps establish fair working conditions, increases production efficiency, and improves the quality of life in every region. Fifth, it is necessary to consolidate the industry level—reducing the number of industry sectors by expanding their sphere of influence. This approach is used to simplify economic management and enhance efficiency.

One example of industry-level consolidation is the creation of so-called "holdings." A holding is an association of several companies operating

in different sectors of the economy under a single management structure. In this way, companies are able to reduce management costs and improve the coordination of their activities.

Industry-level consolidation can also occur through the reorganization of production. For instance, a company might merge several plants producing different products into one large facility that manufactures all of them.

The advantages of industry-level consolidation are clear:

- Reduced costs for management and coordination of company activities;
- Increased production efficiency, as companies can exchange knowledge and technologies;
- The ability for companies to respond more accurately to changes in the economic situation;
- Lower production costs and overall improved efficiency [6].

It's worth noting that industry-level consolidation is not without its drawbacks. It may lead to job losses as companies merge to reduce labor costs. Furthermore, it can result in market monopolization, which negatively affects consumers. It might also stifle innovation and the development of new technologies. Overall, industry consolidation is a vital economic management tool. It enables companies to boost efficiency and competitiveness while lowering administrative overhead. However, implementing this approach requires weighing its disadvantages and balancing benefits against risks.

Sixth, specifying contractual obligations at the local level is essential—this involves clarifying and detailing terms between two or more parties locally. This approach enhances contract performance efficiency and reduces the risk of conflict. Seventh, there is a need to develop legal culture within social partnerships. Employees must know their rights and duties, while employers and unions must clearly understand and apply legislative norms in practice[1]. Eighth, an effective balance between government authorities and enterprises must be maintained. The interaction between the state and business plays a crucial role in establishing and developing the integrity, innovation, and progress of the national economy [3].

Conclusions. The need to address social partnership issues in the labor sphere has been brewing for a long time. Given the current international situation and the transition of the national economy to a wartime footing, there is now fertile ground for resolving these challenges.

State-led solutions must involve all participants in the social partnership. The dialogue between employees and employers should transition from a "paper-only" formality to genuine, active cooperation. Currently, there is an objective opportunity to eliminate significant hurdles, refine the social partnership framework, and radically increase its effectiveness.

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