

Committee: International Labour Organization

Agenda: Achieving the Decent Work Agenda
Through Reinforcement of Collective Agreements

Country: French Republic



Adopted by all United Nations Member States, Sustainable Development Goals provide principles for a better future. There are 17 of the prementioned goals in total and the agenda focuses on the 8th one: Decent Work and Economic Growth. People mandate their lives through their earned livelihoods. Within the rapidly developing world, it is rather straining for workers to keep up with its inefficient points and fight on their own for their deserved rights. As the gap of economic inequality endures to rise among subjects of a nation, a need of voices to be heard rises alongside with it. With this, trade unions come to the scene and help workers engage in activism. By the trigger of trade unions, several employees negotiate with their employer(s) to establish renewed terms of employment and job security, which establishes a recent term called “collective bargaining”. As mentioned above, fighting alone for one’s rights is an incalculable path of seeking rights. More voices equal more of them having a chance on being heard, hence easing the campaign’s way on victory. This underlines the importance of establishing decent work, as it is a clear indicator of why collective bargaining should be a tool of Goal 8.

In France, it is a constitutional right to strike, first implemented in 1946 in the preamble of the *Constitution of the 4th Republic*. Ever since it became a part of the French Labour Code (or Code du Travail) , it has been an expression of conflicts between employees and employers, or the government. Although French citizens often retain to striking, collective bargaining is among many expedients that is approved by the French government and is used profusely as well.

France had ratified the Convention No. 98, *Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention (1949)* and incorporated it into the 1958 Constitution's Preamble. This proves French government's respect and allegiance to their citizens' constitutional rights.

Convention No. 98 is considered one of the core ILO Conventions. This is yet another factor that stresses the importance that the French puts in labour rights. With the recent events that took place in France, it may lead to a false prediction of France's stance on collective bargaining. However, the strikes that took place for the pension reform is a clear display of freedom and unionization of workers. President Emmanuel Macron has stated in many of his speeches that the reform was necessary and that he was displeased to have disputed with his citizens. Furthermore, he explained that the bill had come to life to supervise the budget and prevent any debts moving on to next generations of French youth. The French government is aiming to plan accordingly and form a better future for its citizens as any governing power would.

Collective agreements (or *Conventions Collectives Nationales* or *CCN* in French), are a defining collection of agreements sorted out between unions and employers of certain levels to establish working conditions. The union membership rate among the French citizens is %8, which is remotely lower than many European states. In contrast to the low union density, almost all workplaces are affected by the trade unions. Workplace elections are held every five years to determine which trade union's influence they will be under and will negotiate in case of employment issues. This brings up a %98 of collective bargaining coverage, which represents the amount of workers covered by the collective agreements in force. The process is divided into three primary levels, the three being national, industry and company level. The most preferred one out of the three is national level (centralized) since it brings stronger bargaining power and ensures consistent working conditions for all workers.

Our solution is to promote unionizing to increase collective bargaining rates. As mentioned above, France may have low membership, however there are a lot of active trade

unions that lead today's strikes and negotiates for agreements. Even without high membership rates, unions are substantial tools. By increasing awareness on unionizing among the workers and encouraging employers to cooperate with the trade unions in their country, we can strengthen the bargaining power. This will help us immensely on following through with the decent work agenda as it navigates us to a procession of improved workplace conditions.

As per the tripartite structure of ILO, governments play a great role on the convention ratification rates. The agenda we will be focusing on has great relations with Covention No. 98's contents, yet there are numerous countries that have not ratified the convention at the time. We propose that the final paper we will be submitting this time gets ratified with a higher rate. For that, we should urge governments to approve of the terms and, potentially, advocating for the new provisions to be implemented in their countries. Political opressions may delay the rise of unions. This would both damage the workers and the government since it profusely lowers the productivity of workers and impacts the economy negatively. Hence why, we should encourage governments to strengthen their constitution on labour and protect their workers' rights. Governments should give way to trade unions to branch out, employers should cooperate with trade unions and the workers should be aware of their rights.

In conclusion, ILO's delegates should work together on activating the trade unions among their countries and urge other representatives to cooperate with the rest. Reaching common ground matters a lot on this case, as it will change many workers' life immensely. As the ILO and its delegates, it is our job to provide a justified life for workers all around the world, as well as protecting all of the represented subjects (which also include employers and governments).

The French Republic is ready to assist and supervise as much as possible during the debate. As per our national motto; liberty, equality and fraternity will be the infinite solution to the issues at hand.

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