

Social partners' involvement in the European semester **The case of Belgium**

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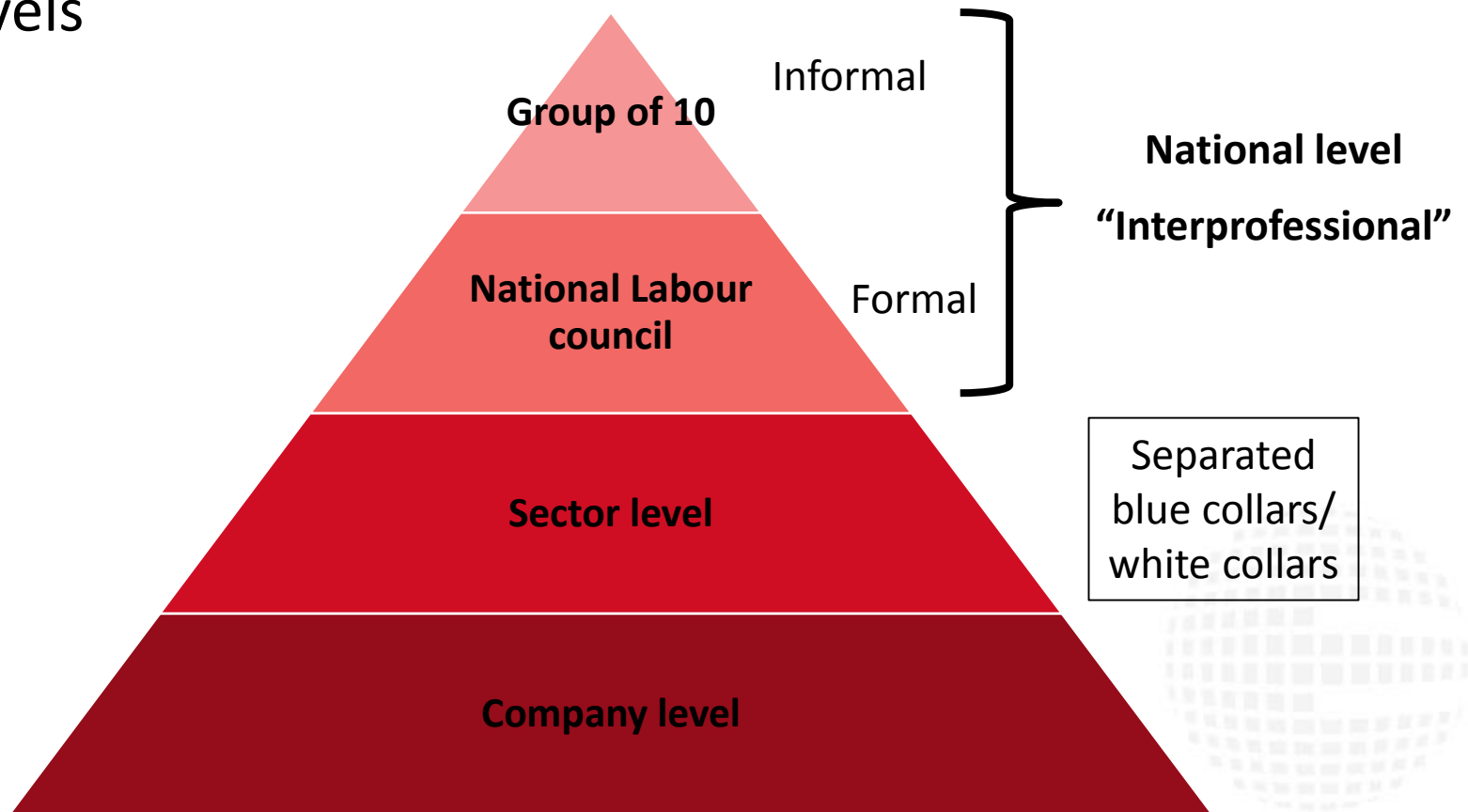
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The Belgian social dialogue model



- Social dialogue between employers and employees at 3 levels



The Belgian social dialogue model at national level



- **National dialogue**

- **Interprofessional Agreement (IPA): general framework for the private sector**
 - Informal agreement between employers' and employees' organizations about wages and labour conditions
 - 2017-2018: Maximum wage increase; early retirement conditions; new rules on long-term illness (reintegration of sick workers); discussions on 'strenuous occupation' and impact on retirement age; Measures for risk-groups, Prosperity-linked mechanism for social allowances; ...
- **Advice committees**
 - **National Labour Council (NLC): social policy**
 - **Central Economic Council (CEC): economic policy**
 - High Council for Prevention and Protection at Work: occupational health and safety

The Belgian social dialogue model



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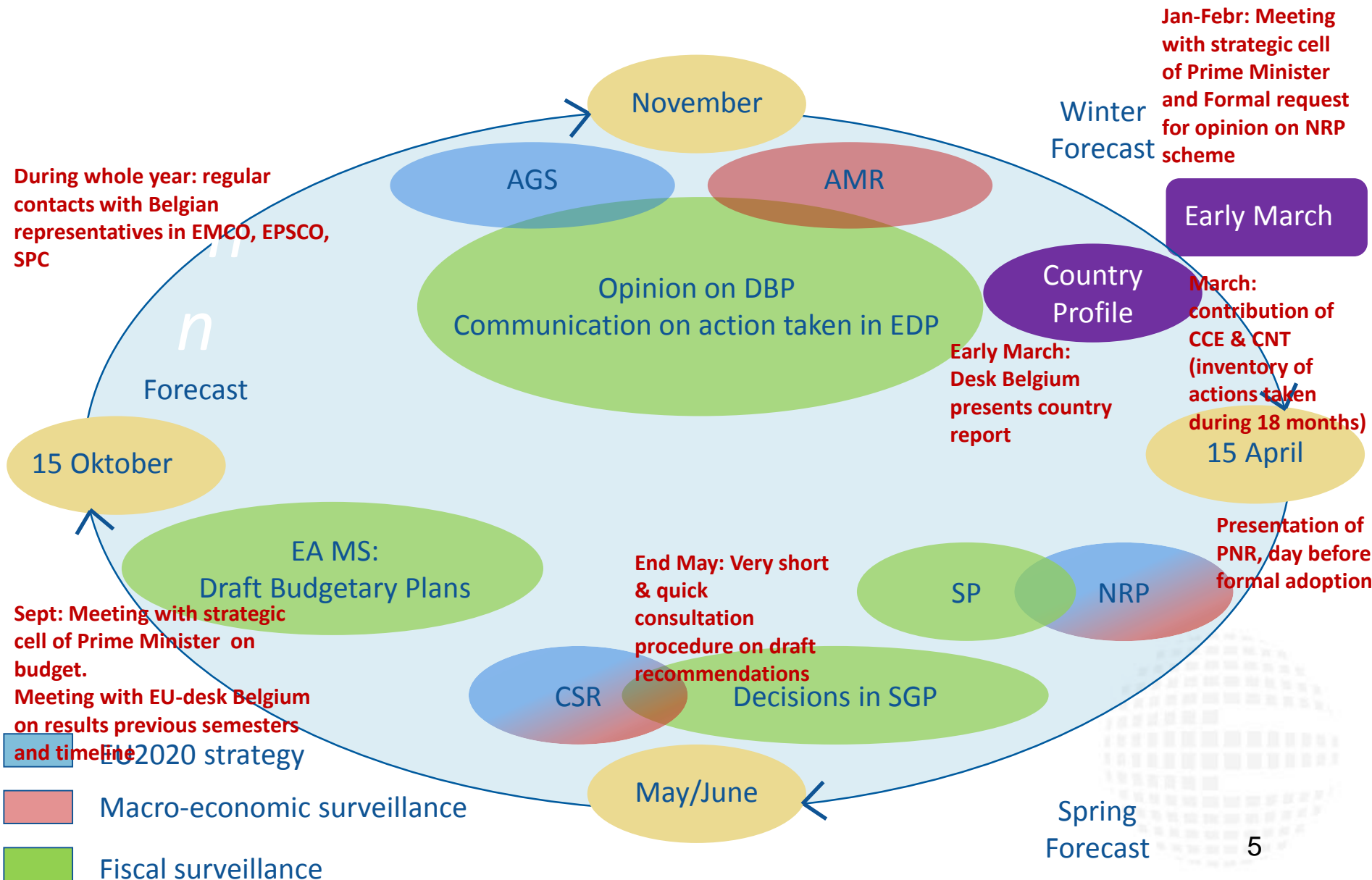


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Involvement of social partners in the annual coordination cycle



COMMON UNDERSTANDING : THE FIRST KEY PRINCIPLES

- **September 2010** : Belgian conference of the CNT-CCE and CESE in the involvement of the social partners in the EU2020 Strategy and in the coming European Semester
- **November 2011** : first National report of the Councils in relation with the Semester
- -> Early awareness process on the national challenges of the Semester -> social partners agreed on the fact that the Semester **was shaping new forms of designing policies that they were supposed to be at the heart of the implementing.**

STRONG NATIONAL SOCIAL DIALOGUE INSTITUTIONS : 2ND KEY PRINCIPLE

- strong social dialogue institutions which provide **information** : immediate link with permanent representatives (EMCO, SPC)
- On a very regular base a lot of consultation (but not influencing the process of the Semester)
- Great implication of the national SP in the Semester : NRP's jointly commented

EUROPEAN SUPPORT AND IMPLICATION: 3ND KEY PRINCIPLE

- Belgian SP's involvement in the European social dialogue
- Reshape of the Semester + political context : an opportunity ...
- The European support initiatives (capacity building process of the ETUC towards its members, raising awareness in the different social dialogue levels, ...) -> the Joint declaration : a relaunch of the joint social interest !

Table 7: Social partners' views on certain aspects of their participation in the European Semester

	Coincidence of employer organisations and trade unions	Employer organisations	Trade unions
Social partners ...			
are aware of the importance of the European Semester process, it really matters to them	AT, BE, CY*, CZ, DE, EE, ES, FI, FR, HR, HU, LV, MT, PL, PT, SE, SI, SK, UK	BG, DK, IE	
allocate enough time and resources to take advantage of the consultation with regard to the NRP and other opportunities to participate and be heard in the European Semester	AT, BE, CY*, CZ, DE, DK, FI (partially), HR, HU (partially), LV, MT, PT (UGT), SE	BG, ES, SK	
Since the beginning of the involvement of social partners in the European Semester in 2011 ...			
participation has been a learning process and has improved their individual and collective capacity	AT, BE, CY*, FR, HR, LV, PL, PT (CIP, CCP since 2015 + UGT), SE	BG, ES, IE	EE, FI, MT
specific practices and experiences have been developed to improve the involvement of the social partners in the European Semester and particularly in the elaboration of the NRP	AT, BE, CY*, FR, HR, LU, LV, SE	BG, IE, PT (CCP)	MT
The involvement is ...			
similar and equally intense and efficient as the one existing in the national social dialogue or policymaking	ES, HU	BG, MT	DE, DK, EE, FI
similar, although the output is less efficient than the existing in the national social dialogue or policymaking	CZ, ES, HR, PL	LV, PT(CCP)	AT, DK, MT
different and less intense and efficient than the one existing in the national social dialogue or policymaking	AT, CY*, DE, ES, FR, IT, PL, PT (CCP, UGT), RO, SI	BE, FI, IE, UK	LV, MT
different and more intense and efficient than the one existing in the national social dialogue or policymaking			BE

Notes: Organisations in some Member States did not answer this question, or did not answer clearly enough. Social partners could choose more than one possibility. * Trade unions DEOK, PASDY, PEO and SEK

Source: Author's own elaboration

SP's view on development of involvement

Table 1: Social partners' views of developments in their involvement in elaboration of the NRP, 2015–2016

National social partners	Considerable improvement ↓	Slight improvement	No change ↓	Deterioration
Employer organisations	BE (FEB/VBO), CY (OEB), RO	BG (BIA), EE, IE	PT (CIP), UK	PT (CCP), SI
Trade unions		PT, RO	BE (CSC/ACV, FGTB/ABW), BG, EE, IE, RO (CSDR), SI	UK
Employer organisations + trade unions		CY (CCCI), HR, LT (2015), PT	BG, CZ, DE, DK, ES, FI, FR, HU, LU, MT, NL, PL, SE	LT (2016), LV

Suggestions for improving the effectiveness of process

- Better time management
 - earlier consultation on draft documents and having more time to read and respond to the documents

Table 8: Suggestions by social partners addressed at improving the efficiency of their involvement

Social partners suggestions related to:	Employer organisations + trade unions	Employer organisations	Trade unions
Better timing (both an earlier start and more time for consultation)	BE, CY, DE, ES, FR, HR, LT, LV, RO	BE (FEB/VBO), PT (CCP)	AT (AK), LV, PL
Their views added as an annex to the NRP or taken into account	AT, BG, DE, LT, LU	AT (ÖGB), DE, PL (ZRP)	
Separate meetings	CY, DK		CY (EAKL)
Broader scope of the consultation	FR	BG (joint position), HU (government to negotiate)	DE, IT, PT (CGTP)

TODAY : GREAT INVOLVEMENT, NO INFLUENCE

- Belgian good example ?
- Government not willing to reinforce the social dialogue
- European Governance : an argument for reforms and policies without proper SP's consultation, CSR's are an opportunity to justify other measures, ...
- **BUT today** : CSR's and country reports more realistic
- Relaunching of the European social dialogue ...the only way forward !

Current themes in social dialogue

1. Execution of Interprofessional Agreement 2017-2018
2. Execution of Law "Feasible and Flexible Work"



2017: Discussions on Societal Challenges



1. Burn-out and absenteeism
2. Simplification of rules and administrative formalities
3. A forward-looking work organization
4. Digitization and Collaborative Economy
5. Mobility budget
6. Restructuring
7. Promotion of youth employment
8. Promotion of hiring and employment
9. Improving and strengthening social dialogue
10. Impact of harmonized statute white and blue collar workers on CPs and other aspects of social dialogue