



Regional
Observatory
of the Transition Process

The role of trade union leaders in the process of changes, marked by the transformation of the mining industry



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Rozwoju Regionalnego



Trade Union of Miners in Poland

Prepared on the basis
of a survey report
by the research
team of the Trade Union
of Miners in Poland

Brochure preparation:

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From June 2022 to February 2023, the research team of the Trade Union of Miners in Poland conducted a study on „The role of union leaders in the process of change marked by the transition of the mining industry”.

The study was carried out as part of the project entitled "*Regional Observatory of the Transition Process*" co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund under the Regional Operational Programme of the Silesian Voivodeship for 2014-2020 and implemented under Measure 1.4. Support for the innovation ecosystem, whose leader is the Marshal's Office of the Silesian Voivodeship.

The study was carried out and a report prepared by a research team consisting of: Bożena Gawryluk Eng, Joanna Górczyńska MA, Dorota Wiktorowska MA, under the direction of Marcin Tomecki Ph.D.

The main aim of the study:

Identifying the role, tasks and areas of potential activity for union leaders to perform during the transition of the mining industry.

The study used a qualitative method in the form of a free-form interview. Interviews were conducted with 2 groups of respondents:

- ▶ Trade union leaders (60 respondents)
- ▶ Employers (10 respondents)

All respondents are associated with mines and mining-related companies based in the Silesian Voivodeship.



INTRODUCTION

Further energy transition activities are currently underway and planned in Silesia, which involves moving from an economy based on traditional fossil fuels towards a sustainable, low-carbon circular economy.

This means a gradual and staggered phasing out of hard coal mines. The repercussions of this will affect not only the mines themselves and their employees, but also many companies associated with the mining industry, as each mine is supported by a number of companies providing products and services. It should be assumed that the transition activities may lead to various consequences, such as, inter alia: temporary difficulties and reduction of the scale of business conducted by mining-related companies, reduction of employment and, in some cases, liquidation of mining-related companies.

The changes will affect the firms, but also the employees, and will require a systematic and thoughtful trade union commitment to the principle of a just energy transition.

The planned activities will result in new challenges for trade unions and their leaders, which has given rise to research into the issue of the role of trade union leaders in the process of change marked by the transition of the mining industry.

It seems natural that the idea for such a study was born in the cradle of mining trade unionism – the Trade Union of Miners in Poland, which has been active in Poland since 1945. It is worth noting that the interviews were conducted between July and December 2022, i.e. in the specific conditions of the energy crisis caused by the aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine. These events affected the respondents' answers, as they changed their optics and, in many cases, even caused confusion. It can be surmised with a high degree of probability that conducting the survey at an earlier time would have produced different results and led to different conclusions.

IDENTIFICATION OF PROBLEMS

It first was looked at the problems perceived by **EMPLOYEES** and **EMPLOYERS** related to the transition, which they signalled to trade union leaders.

The survey showed that respondents perceive 2 types of energy transition problems reported by EMPLOYEES to trade union leaders: the first category is current problems, the second is future problems.

Problems related to the day-to-day operation of mining and other related industries in an era of energy transition

Underinvestment in the mining industry

Staff shortages

Instability of working and pay conditions

Problems of planning personal finances in the long term and in the context of job sustainability

Lack of work motivation instruments

Problems relating to the future of mining and other related industries in the energy transition

Lack of access to reliable information on the energy transition by the government - the problem of transparency

No alternatives to mining

Lack of job stability, continuity and economic security

Anxiety about the financial future

Concerns about the security of Poland's energy independence

The need to protect jobs

Conditions for the allocation of employees - need to transfer to another mine for work

Difficulty in adapting to new working conditions

Lack of access to training to improve staff skills

The need to ensure that employees are able to receive a mining pension and protective benefits

Setting a certain and guaranteed date for the closure of mines in the context of the current political situation

Failure to include employees of peripheral mining companies in the social agreement as set out in Appendix 4

The need to defend against the decommissioning of the mining industry, reverse the trend towards decarbonisation, return to coal and conventional power generation

The future of mining against the background of the war in Ukraine and the current global political situation

Among the main problems that were most frequently signalled to trade union leaders were: the lack of reliable information on the transition, problems related to finding alternatives to mining with an emphasis on job creation, fears for the future, problems related to the retraining of employees, social aspects and, in many cases, the postulation of the need to slow down the decarbonisation process and revise the assumptions made.

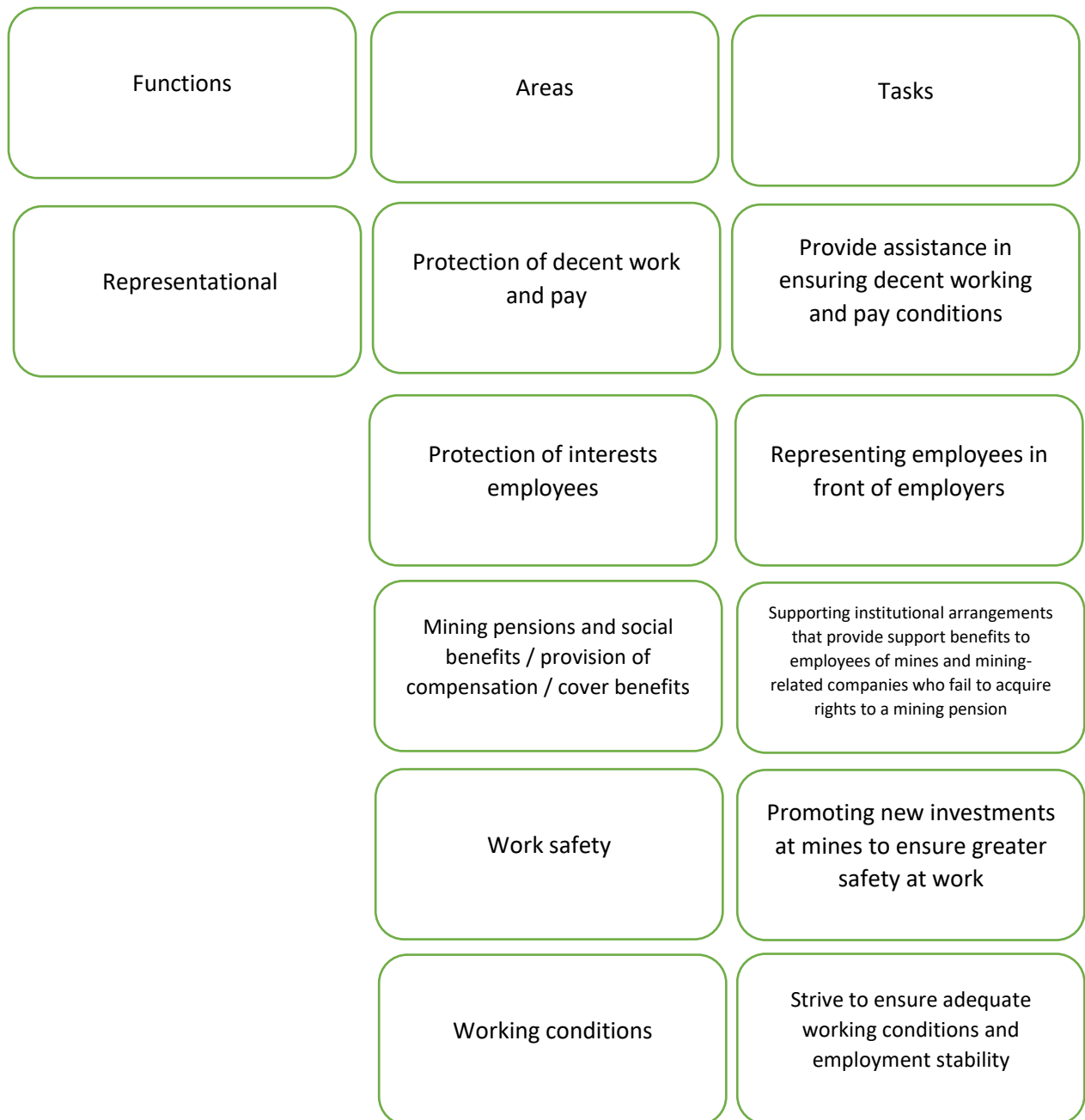
EMPLOYERS' EXPECTATIONS OF TRADE UNION ORGANISATIONS

Based on the survey, it can be concluded that **EMPLOYERS** expect union **ORGANISATION LEADERS** to support them in discussions with the government and employees, to represent the whole industry, to ease tensions, to provide information and to make employees aware of the energy transition processes taking place.



FUNCTIONS, TASKS AND AREAS OF ACTION EXPECTED OF TRADE UNION ORGANISATIONS

The survey identified 3 scopes indicated as functions of the tasks and expectations of **EMPLOYEES** towards trade union organisations:



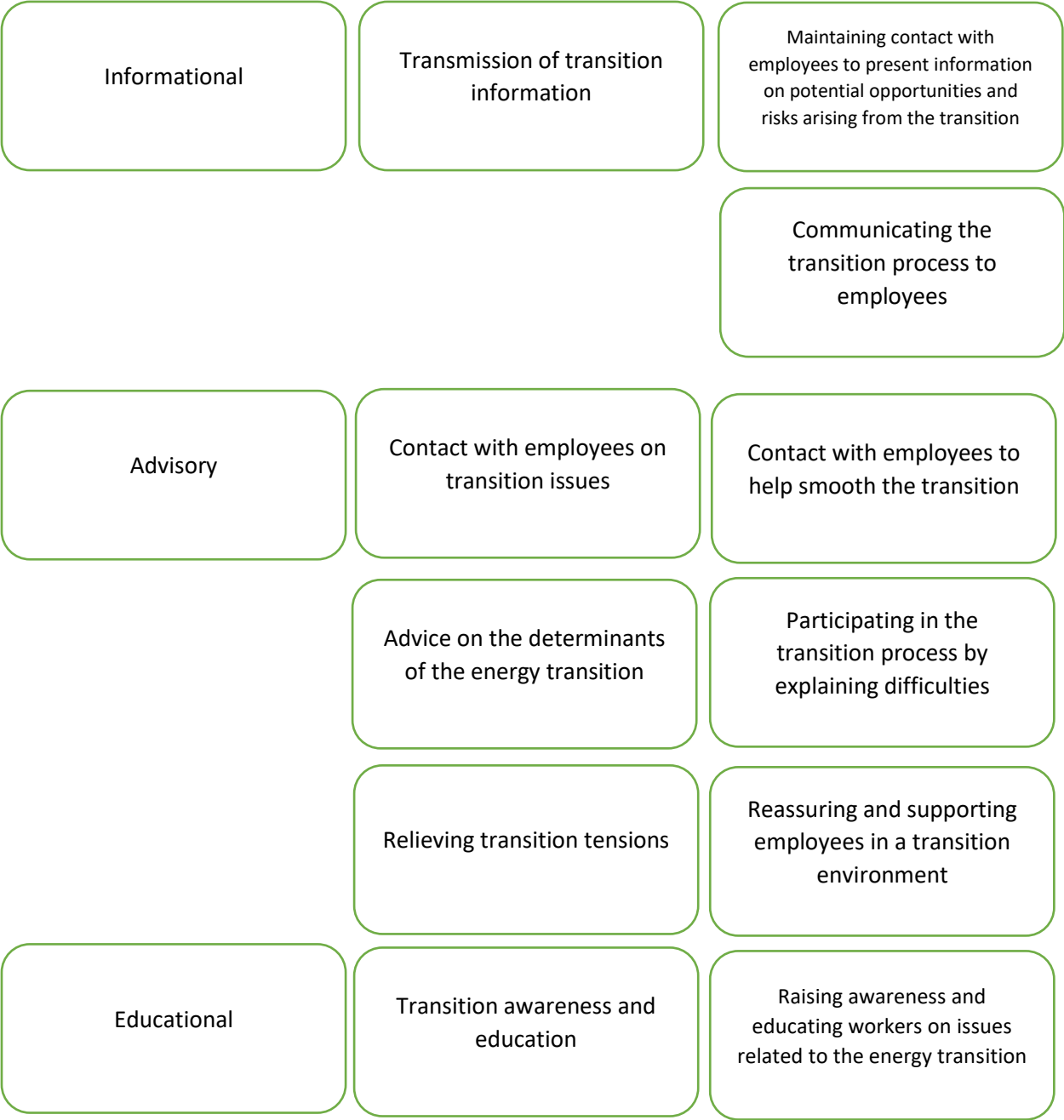
Putting the situation of employees of mining related companies on a par with that of mine employees	Seeking to ensure that employees of mining-related companies (in mining construction and facilities) are protected as outlined in Appendix 4 of the Social Contract
Preventing job losses / protecting jobs	Commitment to protecting jobs
Support in changing jobs	Providing employees with more care if they need to move from one establishment to another
Representation of employees' interests at meetings of various levels	Presentation of employee issues in relation to the transition at EU, national, local and company level
Developing a model for the creation of alternative jobs at regional level	Developing an effective transition model to replace lost jobs with new ones
Promoting greater transparency and openness in the transition process	Enforcement of statutory rights to consultation and reliable information on plans towards mining by the social side from the government side
Law enforcement	Ensuring that the social contract is respected
Extending the life of mines / slowing down the transition process	Putting pressure on the government to extend the exploitation of hard coal deposits in Poland, i.e. to slow down or limit the transition process

Coordinational	Supporting occupational allocation	Promoting solutions that enable a seamless transition from one industry to another
	Coordination of staff training	Participate in the preparation of employees for practising a new profession
	Supporting the development of new staff skills	Supporting employees in retraining and acquiring new skills
Informational	Information on mining industry perspectives	Provision of reliable information on prospects for the mining industry
	Transmission of transition information	Reducing staff information deficits regarding the transition
Advisory	Advice on determinants of transition energy	Contact with employees and advising on related to the transition
Social and welfare	Organisation of social support	Support in day-to-day life

There were also 3 scopes identified as functions, tasks and expectations of **EMPLOYERS** towards trade union organisations:

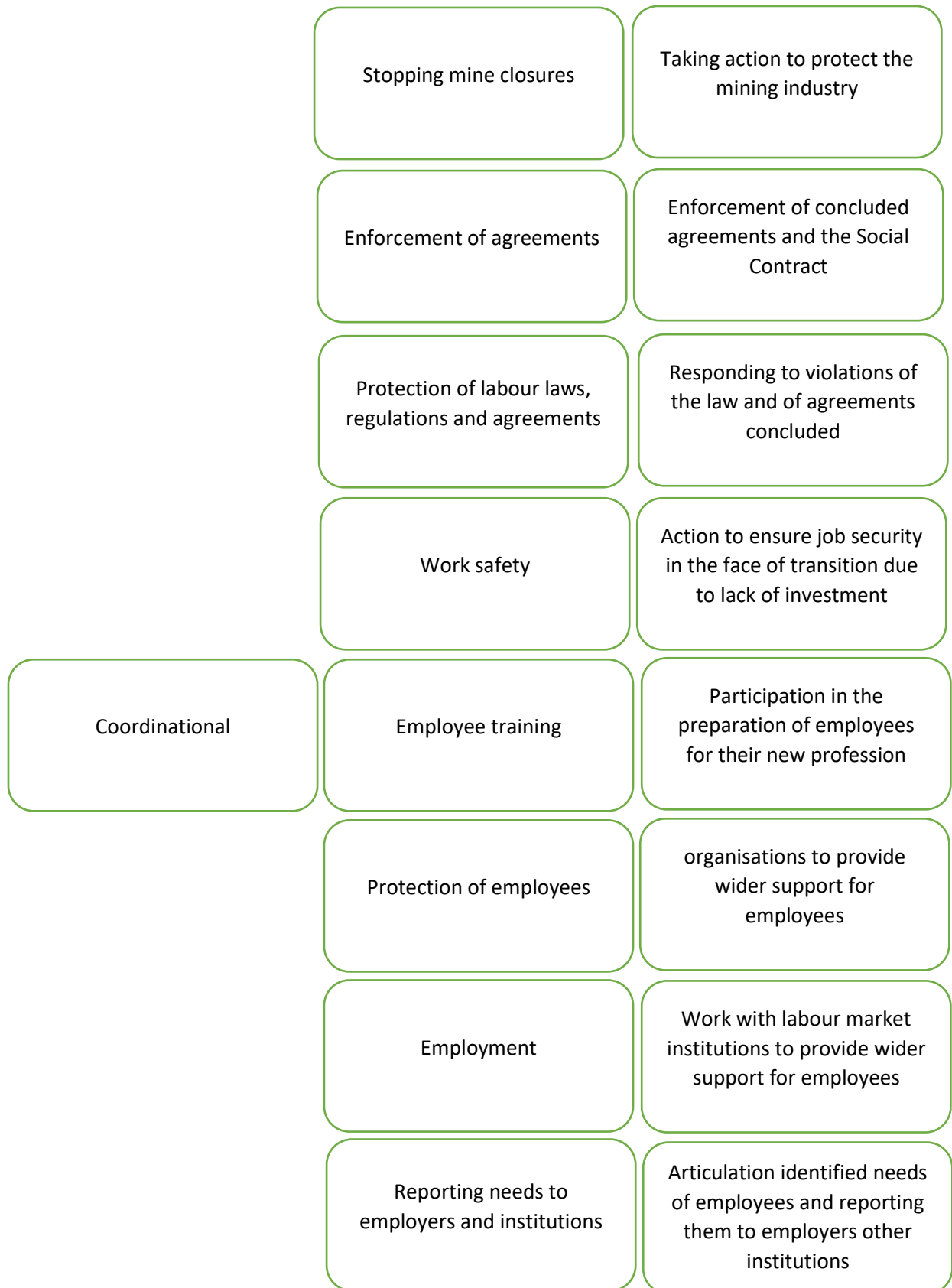
Functions	Areas	Tasks
Representational	Mitigating the negative effects of transition	Intermediation between employees in the workplace, local government units and institutions at government level to mitigate the negative consequences of the transition (national and local government involvement).
	Cover packages	Persuading the authorities on the proposed course of action and the implementation of possible shelter packages
	Mining background matters (mining-related companies)	Make efforts to equalize the rights of underground miners employed at mines and employees of mining-related companies
	Employment	Active participation of the social side in the process of creating new (alternative) jobs at national, regional and local level
	Working and pay conditions	Looking after the interests of employees and defending employees' rights while respecting the interests of the workplace

Representation of employees' interests	Representation of all groups of mine employees (both underground and non-mining), as well as EMPLOYEES of mining-related companies.
Supporting mining-related companies	Participation in solving transition problems affecting mining-related companies
Industry representation	Representing the industry and helping to ensure the country's energy security
Transition planning	Participate in consultations and contribute to the national/regional transition plan
Cooperation with employers	Supporting entrepreneurs in the transition process
Limiting transition	Seeking solutions to slow down decarbonisation - negotiations with government
Coordinational	Supporting activities aiming at new developments jobs
	Intermediation in providing in the future of new jobs

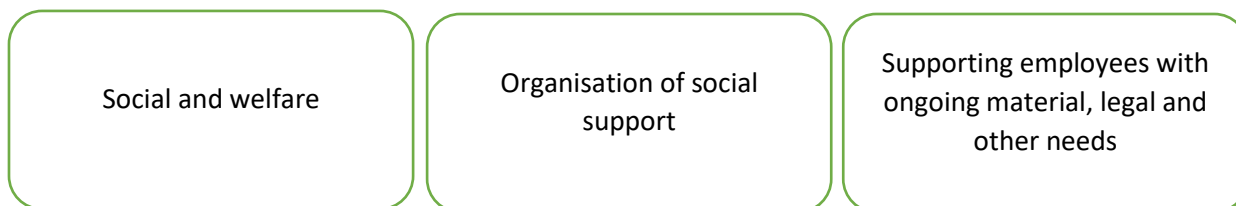


In turn, the **REPRESENTATIVES OF THE TRADE UNION ORGANISATIONS THEMSELVES** see their functions and tasks in this way and set the following expectations for themselves:

Functions	Areas	Tasks
Representational	Protection of employees' rights	Upholding employees' rights and preserving employees' dignity
		Actively participate in discussions and negotiations regarding the creation of transition documents (agreements) at workplace, regional, national and EU level
	Employment	Job protection
		Promoting job creation through cooperation with various institutions
	Working conditions	Negotiating wage increases
		Action to provide employees with social and welfare instruments (protective issues)
	Social protection of employees	Representing employees at workplace, regional, national and EU level








THE KNOWLEDGE OF TRADE UNION LEADERS NECESSARY TO SUPPORT TRANSITION PROCESSES


In the opinion of **EMPLOYERS**, the knowledge of trade union leaders should be improved through training, workshops and self-development.

The survey established what knowledge union leaders need to effectively support the region's energy transition. **EMPLOYEES** believe that **LEADERS** should have knowledge in the following areas:

 Area of knowledge	THE ISSUES:	
	→ Economics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Macro and microeconomics ▶ The economics of mining ▶ Business management
	→ Law	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Labour law ▶ Selected aspects of social security law ▶ Trade Union Act
	→ Mining and energy sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Industry knowledge of a particular market segment ▶ Market situation (market challenges) ▶ Technical requirements of the jobs in question
	→ Company	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Current situation in the company (lines of action, financial condition, budget)
	→ National and foreign policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Energy transition ▶ Government plans for transition ▶ Plans related to the restructuring and decommissioning of the mining sector ▶ Geopolitical knowledge ▶ Selected environmental aspects ▶ National energy security

The leaders themselves mostly recognised that their knowledge in the face of the energy transition needed to be expanded. They advocated the need for training for them to prepare them intellectually to carry out their tasks.

LEADERS identified the following necessary areas of education:

 <p>Area of knowledge</p>	THE ISSUES:	
	→ Economics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Macro and microeconomics ▶ Finance ▶ Business management
	→ Law	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Labour law ▶ "Union" legislation ▶ Social contract ▶ Transition acts ▶ Trade Union Act ▶ "Mining" laws ▶ Collective agreements ▶ Knowledge of implementing acts ▶ Poland's Energy Policy until 2040. ▶ Just Transition Fund, European Funds
	→ Mining and energy sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Industry knowledge of a particular market segment ▶ Market situation (market challenges) ▶ Renewable energy sources ▶ Technical requirements of the jobs in question
	→ Company	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Current situation in the company
	→ National and foreign policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Energy transition ▶ Government's transition plans ▶ Knowledge of the results of meetings with the government side and local government units ▶ Restructuring and liquidation plans ▶ European Union policy ▶ Geopolitical knowledge ▶ Selected aspects of environmental protection ▶ National energy security ▶ Knowledge of the mechanisms involved in the change process

THE SOCIAL COMPETENCES OF TRADE UNION LEADERS NECESSARY TO SUPPORT TRANSITION PROCESSES

EMPLOYERS were the first to comment on the level of social competence of union leaders. Their opinion was generally positive. However, they pointed out some areas that would be worth improving in workshops and trainings and these are:

AREA OF COMPETENCE		POSTULATED RECOMMENDATIONS:
Cooperation skill	→	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Increasing the sensitivity of leaders to the needs of the workplace ▶ The need for constructive and empathetic cooperation
Communication skills	→	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ The ability not only to speak but also to listen to the other party ▶ Improving the provision of information ▶ Openness to the interlocutor's arguments ▶ Reducing messages based on emotions
Persuasion skill	→	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Ability to argue one's own position ▶ Raising the culture of speech ▶ Ethical behaviour
Self-presentation	→	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Ability to present one's own position ▶ Substantive defence of the position presented
Speeches public	→	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Ability to perform in a variety of places and situations (including in the media)
Psychology	→	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Development of competence in management psychology

The LEADERS themselves assessed their competences differently and identified many more areas for development:

AREA OF COMPETENCE		POSTULATED RECOMMENDATIONS:
Cooperation skill	→	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Need to increase the sensitivity of leaders to the needs of the workplace ▶ The need for constructive and empathetic cooperation ▶ Ability to work in a group, talk to the group ▶ The need to win people over to the demands being made ▶ Building trust based on fairness to both employee and employer ▶ Cooperation based on rational and factual communication based on logic and arguments
Communication skills	→	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ The need to communicate with the employee based on conversation and listening to the other person ▶ Improving the way information is communicated (readability of the message) ▶ Openness to the interlocutor's arguments ▶ Developing the ability to communicate good and bad information in the transition process ▶ Developing the ability to communicate sensitive information that may be of concern to employees ▶ Development of psychological skills related to the way communication is carried out, adapting to different types of interlocutors ▶ Improving communication skills through so-called new media (social media, internet forums, instant messaging) ▶ Development of press release drafting skills ▶ Development of non-verbal communication "body language" ▶ Improving the ability to formulate trade union demands in writing ▶ Reducing messages based on emotions, arousing negative feelings
Persuasion skill	→	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Ability to substantively argue one's position ▶ Need to develop persuasion skills ▶ Developing the use of influencing techniques
Resolving conflicts	→	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Development of conflict resolution and tension management skills (conflict management) ▶ Taking action in the right way and at the right time
Savoir-vivre and etiquette	→	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ In some cases, necessary improvements in attitude and image ▶ Raising the culture of speech ▶ Behaviour consistent with etiquette ▶ Selection of clothing appropriate to the situation
Self-presentation	→	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Ability to present one's own position ▶ Substantive defence of the position presented

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ In some cases, improving the ability to cope with stage fright ▶ Maintaining diplomacy in relations
Public speeches	→	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Ability to appear in a variety of venues (including the media) ▶ Raising the media profile of some leaders (PR) ▶ Improving skills in dealing with the media ▶ Stress resilience (coping with stress) ▶ Developing contacts with the media
Negotiation and mediation skills	→	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Developing the ability to reach agreements and undertake mediation ▶ The role of trade unions as mediators
Psychology	→	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Development of skills in the psychology of change



BARRIERS AND CONSTRAINTS FOR TRADE UNION LEADERS AND ORGANISATIONS

Constraints OF UNION LEADERS

The main constraints of trade union **LEADERS** are, **IN THE OPINION OF EMPLOYERS**, constraints in the sphere of social competences, i.e. in terms of e.g.: cooperation, communication and persuasion skills. In addition, in their opinion, these limitations are partly due to deficits in knowledge concerning the impact of market mechanisms on the functioning of the enterprise.

The main constraints of trade union **LEADERS IN THEIR OPINION** are limitations in terms of knowledge and social competences held, and in some cases at the level of bilateral and tripartite social dialogue.

Barriers and constraints for UNITED ORGANISATIONS

EMPLOYERS perceive the following barriers and constraints to transition action by trade union organisations:

- Legal barriers,
- Failure to inform trade union organisations,
- Fragmentation of trade union organisations,
- Financial constraints.

LEADERS identified the following barriers for trade union organisations:

- Legal barriers,
- Lack of commitment by some union leaders to their own development,
- Failure to inform trade union organisations,
- Fragmentation of trade union organisations,
- Financial constraints,
- Limited communication between unions,
- Low level of involvement of some members in union organisation activities,
- Declining interest in trade union membership,
- Lack of training.

THE NEEDS OF TRADE UNION ORGANIZATIONS AND THEIR LEADERS, TO ACTIVELY PARTICIPATE IN THE TRANSITION

FORMAL AND LEGAL needs

EMPLOYERS' views on the needs of trade union organisations were divided. Some believe that the existing formal and legal arrangements are sufficient.

In contrast, the other part believes that additional solutions should be sought to ensure greater participation of trade union organisations in the dialogue by setting adequate time and conditions for presenting their positions and legal instruments to provide trade union organisations with additional sources of funding.

In terms of the formal and legal arrangements, the **UNION LEADERS** identified the issue of participation in the consultation process in such a way as to ensure greater participation, giving them time and conditions to speak and present their position. In addition, they called for greater access to information on the energy transition from the government, local government and employer side. They also saw the need for changes to the rules governing the formation and functioning of trade unions.

Other needs of UNION ORGANISATIONS

Both **LEADERS** and **EMPLOYERS** signalled the need to improve the knowledge and social competences of trade union leaders and members.

Both parties also pointed out the existence of significant deficits in the flow of information, which are a source of constraints on the activities of trade union organisations and their leaders, and called for trade union participation in the transition process to be made possible through the organisation of meetings, consultations at national and local government levels.

SUMMARY

The aim of the study is to better and more effectively involve trade union organisations in the energy transition process in Silesia. The research team hopes that the study, the report and this brochure synthetically present the diagnosed problems and that the involvement of representatives of various institutions with the support of trade unions will allow employees to go through this difficult process more easily.

