

TRADE UNION FACTORS IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY IN FRAMEWORK WITH THE SDGS, INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL AGREEMENTS: THE EXAMPLE OF THE CIS COUNTRIES

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ABSTRACT

The article examines the current trends in the trade union movement in chosen countries, their influence on the formation of the environmental agenda, as well as their ability to adapt the activities of trade unions to new challenges. Based on the example of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) countries the paper explores the role of trade unions in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) achievement. The analytical cut concerns the issues of the environmental component. The issue is considered from the perspective of the international environmental agreements as a tool to achieve such goals (Paris Climate Agreement, UNFCCC, Aarhus Convention).

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Since the results of the study showed that in the post-Soviet countries labor unions are deprived of a wide range of rights in the field of policy development, certain ways of development, and increasing their role in the context of adjustment to the SDGs in the field of ecology are proposed. This study is of interest to lawyers practicing in several fields at once, as it makes a significant contribution to the science of comparative law from the perspective of considering the relationship between environmental protection law, labor law, international policy, and legal initiatives on the SDGs.

KEYWORDS: *international environmental agreements, labor union, production greening, social partnership, sustainable development, sustainable development goals.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The problem of approaching the goals of sustainable development, enshrined in Agenda 2030, is in constant discussion at the world level and is associated with the tasks of socio-economic development faced by the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) countries. The states of the former USSR actively participated in the development of the UN agenda in the field of sustainable development, taking into account their primary tasks, such as: promoting sustainable industrial development, ensuring road safety, promoting a healthy lifestyle, combating non-communicable diseases, expanding reliable access to basic services in the field of energy, transport, education, health care, social protection.¹

At the same time, the SDGs have two sides that can conflict with each other. The first side focuses on achieving the “harmony with nature” concept and taking action on the implementation of the Goals 6, 12, 13, 14, and 15. Another one is to continue global economic growth at existing levels or higher by 2030 as outlined in Goal 8, assuming growth is essential for human development and the eradication of global social challenges like poverty and hunger. Several studies have noted that in order to level out contradictions, the SDGs embody trade-offs in favor of economic growth rather than social well-being and environmental resilience.²

For a long time, questions about defining the role of trade unions in the fight against climate change have not been convincingly reflected either in society

¹ Breuer, A.; Leininger, J. and Tosun, J.: *Integrated Policymaking: Choosing an Institutional Design for Implementing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)*, Bonn, 2019.

² Gupta, J. and Vegelin, C.: *Sustainable development goals and inclusive development*, International Environmental Agreements: Politics, Law and Economics, 16(3) 2016, [<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10784-016-9323-z>], pp. 433-448.

or in the literature.³ There was a perception that labor unions are rarely recognized for their role and activities beyond industrial issues. Moreover, their activities, as a rule, were analyzed in connection with industrial relations and the vested interests of trade union organizations. And although over time, this opinion has been refuted by several studies where it was noted that trade unions, in general, have been active environmental activists and contributed to the protection of the environment through systematic training,⁴ the question of which international environmental agreements trade unions can appeal to if they have certain environmental initiatives, and their implementation remained open. So, for example, the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-Making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (Aarhus Convention) at one time became a revolutionary document, which stipulated that each person, regardless of age, nationality, and place of residence, can contact a state body with an information request, without explaining the reasons for the need for this information. However, despite the clarity of its mechanisms, the frequency of its use by trade union organizations was rather limited. It is permissible to assume that this limitation is caused, to some extent, by the lack of data (including research) on how such documents can be used by trade unions.

Based on existing research, it can be argued that trade union discussions on sustainable development and environmental issues began with the preparations for the world's first Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. The Rio Declaration specifically refers to the role of different groups in protecting the environment and achieving the goal of sustainable development. It also specifically mentions social groups like women, youth, and indigenous people and their communities, but declares nothing about how these groups can organize their participation. In Section 3 of Agenda 21, entitled "Strengthening the Role of Key Populations", the groups listed above already include workers, trade unions, businesses and industry, scientists and farmers, and activities to strengthen their roles include promoting freedom of association and increasing

³ Khan, H. and Khan, W.A.: *Labor unions' role for environmental protection-by exerting efforts for training, education and awareness of workers about environment*, Greener Journal of Social Sciences, 2(2) 2012, [<https://doi.org/10.15580/GJSS.2012.2.GJSS1214>], pp. 89-96.

⁴ Gronow, A. and Ylä-Anttila, T.: *Cooptation of ENGOs or treadmill of production? Advocacy coalitions and climate change policy in Finland*, Policy Studies Journal, 47(4) 2019, [<https://doi.org/10.1111/psj.12185>], pp. 860-881; Khan, H. and Khan, W.A.: *Labor unions' role for environmental protection-by exerting efforts for training, education and awareness of workers about environment*, Greener Journal of Social Sciences, 2(2) 2012, [<https://doi.org/10.15580/GJSS.2012.2.GJSS1214>], pp. 89-96; [https://etd.ohiolink.edu/apexprod/rws_etd/send_file/send?accession=oberlin1241906474&disposition=inline], accessed on 13/01/2022.

participation and consultation (Stack and Casey-Lefkowitz, 2000). Agenda 21 stipulates that working towards sustainable development requires adjustments and realizing opportunities at the national and business levels, with a focus on workers in the first place. Trade unions, as workers' representative bodies, are considered a vital force in promoting sustainable development, given their experience in adapting to changes in the industrial sector. The existing system of cooperation between trade unions and their large membership is considered as an important channel through which support for sustainable development concepts and practices can be mobilized.⁵

This process has been continuing to intensify in the late 2000s / early 2010s, especially during the development of a common policy and strategy for the meeting of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in December 2009 in Copenhagen.⁶

The issue of the role of labor unions in adapting to SDGs, although considered in the context of socio-economic rights, production growth, and poverty reduction, remains unexplored and usually does not concern environmental goals.

Thus, the purpose of the study is to identify tools, in particular legal ones, that can be used by trade unions to achieve SDGs in the field of ecology, paying attention to features and problems that exist in the CIS countries. The study suggests that such instruments can be mechanisms of international environmental agreements (UNFCCC, Aarhus Convention). To this end, the study has several tasks: to study the ability of labor unions to influence the political and legal situation in the CIS countries in the field of ecology; to identify what tools labor unions can use to adapt to the SDGs.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study absorbed knowledge from various fields, and became complex, between environmental protection, the current state of labor unions, and the achievement of SDGs. The methodology of this study was chosen to identify existing synergies and create a basis for further research. Thus, the main trends in the development of labor unions around the world and their role in adap-

⁵ [<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/Agenda21.pdf>], accessed on 13/04/2021.

⁶ Khan, H. and Khan, W.A.: *Labor unions' role for environmental protection-by exerting efforts for training, education and awareness of workers about environment*, Greener Journal of Social Sciences, 2(2) 2012, [<https://doi.org/10.15580/GJSS.2012.2.GJSS1214>], pp. 89-96; [<https://www.uncclern.org/wp-content/uploads/library/unifem05.pdf>], accessed on 13/04/2021.

tation to the SDGs through the mechanisms of international environmental agreements (including the UNFCCC, and the Aarhus Convention) were identified by the method of functional analysis of national legislation and international acts. By the method of comparison, the roles of labor unions in specific CIS member-states were compared with each other, with the recommendations of the International Labor Organization (ILO), and trends in developed countries. Besides, this study combines a rigorous and transparent literature review with quantitative analysis to synthesize this area of interdisciplinary research and identify intersections between different areas of relevant literature, such as ecology, public policy, and the role of labor unions. This is done in order to consider the problem under study systematically and give appropriate recommendations.

The purpose of the study is due to the new challenges that labor unions face in connection with the adaptation of the CIS countries to the concept of sustainable development, as well as the contradiction, to some extent, of the goals themselves, which affects its development and implementation national policy.

This article considers the role of trade unions, in particular, from the point of view of the scope of their rights in the field of adaptation of states to the SDGs, the participation of trade unions in the development and implementation of environmental policies at the international and local levels in accordance with the SDGs, environmental conventions (Paris Climate Agreement, UNFCCC, Aarhus Convention). To achieve research goals the study examines the provisions of CIS countries' legislation concerning labor unions (Russia's Federal Law of 12.01.1996 N 10-FZ "On trade unions, their rights and guarantees of activity", the Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan "On trade unions", the Law of the Republic of Belarus "On trade unions"), strategic planning documents (including "Main directions of activities of the Government of the Russian Federation for the period up to 2024"), legislation of other counties in the area of labor law (in particular Finland - The Employment Contracts Act, Associations Act, Co-operation Within Undertakings Act, Japan - Labor Union Act), recommendations and directives of international organizations in the sustainable development dimension, as well as global trends in the field of environmental protection. It is in this relationship that it becomes possible to identify the existing shortcomings in the organization of labor union movements, their powers, as well as the role in the development of state policy in the field of ecology, and then give appropriate recommendations.

3. RESULTS

3.1. LABOR UNION ROLE IN THE ENVIRONMENT-RELATED SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS ACHIEVEMENT

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which were set under Resolution 70/1 “Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development” at the UN General Assembly on September 25, 2015, cover a wide range of issues facing developing and developed countries. This Agenda defined the SDGs for fifteen years. The 17 goals and 169 objectives of the Agenda are aimed at ensuring a sustainable balance of economic, social, and environmental aspects of the development of the entire international community in the long term.⁷ Currently, environmental disasters such as drought, floods, and pollution of agricultural land are increasingly shaping the global agenda. It is clear that climate change policy is becoming increasingly relevant to achieving global goals in all dimensions. Transforming the economy with a green dimension can also help build sustainable climate change policies.⁸ At the same time, sustainable development means not only the ecological dimension of the way of life but also the socio-economic aspects of the coexistence of people. Rising poverty and inequality are long-term risks to the world. Today, growing social inequality is seen by many international organizations as a threat to peaceful coexistence throughout the world.⁹

Of course, the issues of compatibility of some of the SDGs, in particular, the eradication of poverty, the achievement of economic growth, and environmental sustainability, while achieving these goals, are controversial. Speaking about the existing disagreements, it is obvious that the settlement of such

⁷ United Nations: *Transforming Our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. Department of Economic and Social Affairs, United Nations, 2015.

⁸ Adams, R.; Jeanrenaud, S.; Bessant, J.; Denyer, D. and Overy, P.: *Sustainability-oriented innovation: A systematic review*. International Journal of Management Reviews, 18(2) 2016, [<https://doi.org/10.1111/ijmr.12068>], pp. 180-205; Boas, I.; Biermann, F. and Kanie, N.: *Cross-sectoral strategies in global sustainability governance: towards a nexus approach*, International Environmental Agreements: Politics, Law and Economics, 16(3) (2016), [<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10784-016-9321-1>], pp. 449-464.

⁹ Dentchev, N.; Baumgartner, R.; Dieleman, H.; Jóhannsdóttir, L.; Jonker, J.; Nyberg, T.; Rauter, R.; Rosano, M.; Snihur, Y.; Tang, X. and van Hoof, B.: *Embracing the variety of sustainable business models: social entrepreneurship, corporate intrapreneurship, creativity, innovation, and other approaches to sustainability challenges*, Journal of Cleaner Production, 113 2016, [<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jclepro.2015.10.130>], pp. 1-4; Garnett, S.T.; Lawes, M.J.; James, R.; Bigland, K. and Zander, K.K.: *Portrayal of sustainability principles in the mission statements and on home pages of the world's largest organizations*, Conservation Biology, 30(2) 2016, [<https://doi.org/10.1111/cobi.12617>]. pp. 297-307.

disagreements lies in the plane of compromise solutions. At the same time, it is undoubtedly positive that traditional business and industry are increasingly accepting the new rules of the game, evaluating their activities in terms of compatibility with the SDGs in the context of environmental sustainability issues.¹⁰ Many organizations, including industrial companies, environmental NGOs, and government agencies, are now much more willing to publicly acknowledge the importance of issues outside their core business, such as poverty alleviation, biodiversity conservation, and sustainable supply chains.¹¹ In this context, it is important to understand what tools and mechanisms can be used for this. One such tool is trade unions, whose potential to achieve the SDGs is far from being unlocked. However, in order to answer the question of whether their role will become declarative or not, it is important to understand what normative framework can support this role. At the international level, this regulatory framework is formed by specialized environmental agreements. The role of international agreements in the field of environmental protection (EP) in achieving the SDGs is quite obvious. As noted by the UN, in addition to national legislation and bilateral agreements, multilateral environmental agreements form a comprehensive international legal framework for global efforts to address environmental problems. Partnership under multilateral environmental agreements is a cornerstone in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.¹² International environmental agreements are treaties concluded, signed, and ratified by individual states to solve transboundary environmental problems.¹³ Despite the wide range of environmental agreements of different levels and scopes, it is clear that not all of them can be used by trade unions to help achieve the SDGs. However, some of them are directly related to the achievement of the SDGs (Paris Climate Agreement), or their significance for the achievement of the SDGs is noted at the international level (UNFCCC, Aarhus Convention, Espoo Convention).¹⁴

¹⁰ Gupta, J. and Vegelin, C.: *Sustainable development goals and inclusive development*, International Environmental Agreements: Politics, Law and Economics, 16(3) 2016, [https://doi.org/10.1007/s10784-016-9323-z], pp. 433-448.

¹¹ Khan, H. and Khan, W.A.: *Labor unions' role for environmental protection-by exerting efforts for training, education and awareness of workers about environment*, Greener Journal of Social Sciences, 2(2) 2012, [https://doi.org/10.15580/GJSS.2012.2.GJSS1214], pp. 89-96.

¹² [https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/37904/English%20-%20K2103334.pdf?sequence=1&disAllowed=y], accessed on 13/01/2022.

¹³ Altamirano-Cabrera, J.C.; Wangler, L.; Weikard, H.P. and Kroll, S.: Political Economy of International Environmental Agreements, in *Encyclopedia of Energy, Natural Resource, and Environmental Economics*. Vol. 3 *Environment* New York, 2013, [https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-12-375067-9.00021-8], pp. 300-305; [https://ec.europa.eu/environment/international_issues/agreements_en.htm], accessed on 13/01/2022.

¹⁴ [https://www.ciwf.org.uk/media/7427368/implementing-the-paris-climate-agreement-and-the-2030-sustainable-development-goals.pdf], accessed on 13/01/2022.

Thus, the role of the Aarhus Convention in achieving the SDGs has been repeatedly noted at the UN level. The Economic Commission for Europe has noted that increasing public access to environmental information will contribute to the achievement of several SDG goals.¹⁵ The importance of the Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context (Espoo Convention) for the achievement of the SDGs has been noted, *inter alia*, by the Economic Commission for Europe. The Espoo Convention and its Protocol on SEA provide the legal framework and clear procedures for the full integration of environmental and health considerations into a wide range of development activities, plans, and programs in all sectors of the economy. Due to the cross-sectoral nature of EIA and SEA, the effective application of the Convention, and especially the Protocol, could effectively contribute to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the achievement of almost all SDGs. As ECE notes, similar to the Aarhus Convention, these two treaties promote access to environmental information, stakeholder consultation, and public participation, leading to greater transparency and effective public participation, which play an important role in the process of achieving the SDGs.

Speaking about how the relationship between the SDGs and the trade union movement is traced, it is necessary to refer to the fundamental policy documents in the field of sustainable development. Their origins date back to the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, which resulted in the adoption of Agenda 21. Agenda 21 recognizes that sustainable development requires the constructive and active participation of the following nine “major groups”: business and industry, children and youth, farmers, indigenous peoples, local authorities, non-governmental organizations, scientific and technical community, women, workers, and trade unions.¹⁶

In December 2019, at the 25th Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet highlighted the role of trade unions in ensuring the protection of decent work and social security, the rights to peaceful assembly and association, and in another issue. In doing so, the High Commissioner highlighted the need to come together and strengthen collective action to ensure a just and environmentally sustainable transition and noted that trade unions have a key role to play in shaping such policies.¹⁷

¹⁵ [<https://unece.org/media/Environment/news/119>], accessed on 13/01/2022.

¹⁶ [<https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/35162/Doc3%20Reve1%20EnglishK2100501.pdf?sequence=1&disAllowed=y>], accessed on 13/04/2021.

¹⁷ [<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?LangID=EandNewsID=25401>], accessed on 13/04/2021.

The search for ways to solve the environmental problems of mankind based on the transition to a sustainable world with a green economy, which is carried out by the modern world community, affected, according to the ILO, at least half of the world workforce - the equivalent of 1.5 billion people. Therefore, global unions cannot stand aside from this process, developing an approach to environmental policy that meets the interests of millions of workers. The main role in the elaboration of such a policy was taken by the International Trade Union Confederation, which represents the majority of the national trade union centers of the world, and which gives environmental issues one of the priority places at all congresses since 2006. In the documents of the founding congress of this organization (Vienna, November 2006) the protection of the environment has been included in the number of its main tasks. The Constitution of the International Trade Union Confederation, adopted at the Congress, recognizes the importance of trade unions to address environmental issues.¹⁸

Participation in national development programs can be fraught with several challenges, and this must be taken into account when engaging in national SDG processes. Such problems include:

- lack of internal capacity: labor unions may lack the capacity to effectively participate in national SDG processes. They may lack the political experience and competencies needed to engage constructively in political debate, or they may lack the organizational capacity to follow up on complex long-term processes, etc.¹⁹
- diversion of limited resources: participating in national development programs may require more human and financial resources away from other tasks;
- the absence of favorable conditions for the realization of the principle of freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining also poses problems in terms of recognizing the legitimacy of labor union participation in national socio-economic policies. Such union participation can also be discouraged by the government for political reasons;²⁰

¹⁸ Zubkov, S.A.: *Environmental Initiatives by Global Unions*, Social and Humanitarian Knowledge, 3 2020 [https://doi.org/10.34823/SGZ.2020.2.51379], pp. 187-200.

¹⁹ Rahdari, A., Sepasi, S. and Moradi, M.: *Achieving sustainability through Schumpeterian social entrepreneurship: The role of social enterprises*, Journal of Cleaner Production, 137 2016, [https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jclepro.2016.06.159], pp. 347-360.

²⁰ Ayling, J. and Gunningham, N.: *Non-state governance and climate policy: The fossil fuel divestment movement*, Climate Policy, 17(2) 2017, [https://doi.org/10.1080/14693062.2015.1094729], pp. 131-149.

- the risk of legitimizing outcomes that are not necessarily supported by labor unions when participating in national development programs.²¹ Governments can use a participatory process as a front to promote policies that are not meet the workers` interests.

Trade unions have an important role to play in ensuring that governments meet their commitments, in particular under the Paris Climate Agreement.

Thus, the ILO recommends that labor unions,²² inter alia, make sure:

- that a country’s contribution to the implementation of the agreement is comprehensive and covers aspects related to decent work and a just transition to an environmentally sustainable economy;
- that each country’s contribution is part of its national sustainable development strategy, in line with the 2030 Agenda principles;
- that the Paris Agreement framework of five-year review cycles, whereby each country’s contribution is assessed against its commitments and capabilities, is well thought out and includes civil society participation in the evaluation as a key to building trust in the system;
- that clear standard for measuring progress and reporting are defined to ensure that commitments are met;
- that funds are allocated at national, sectoral, and regional levels to finance a just transition to an environmentally sustainable economy;
- that the transfer of technology and knowledge takes place, especially for developing countries support.

In general, for labor unions under Goal 13 (taking urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts), such tasks and the corresponding indicators can be identified, as set out in Table 1.

²¹ Dzebo, A.; Janetschek, H.; Brandi, C. and Iacobuta, G.: *The Sustainable Development Goals Viewed through a Climate Lens. SEI Policy Brief*, Stockholm, 2018.

²² ILO: *International Labor Organization’s Guidelines for a Just Transition towards Environmentally Sustainable Economies and Societies for All*, ILO, 2015.

Table 1. Labor union priority tasks and indicators for sustainable development

Tasks	Indicators
Incorporate environmental protection measures into national strategies and plans	The number of countries that have implemented a comprehensive policy/strategy that improves their adaptation to the negative impacts of environmental change and contributes to the development of their ability to cope with climate change in a way that does not entail a decrease in food production (including national adaptation plan, education system, or another).
Assist in finding ways to consolidate environmental planning and management capabilities in the least developed countries, in cooperation with international labor union associations	The number of developing countries that benefit from specific support to create mechanisms to strengthen environmental planning and management capacities, with a focus on women, young people, and local communities, and the amount of such support, including funding and capacity building.

3.2. THE PARTICIPATION OF TRADE UNIONS IN ACHIEVING THE SDGS: THE EXPERIENCE OF THE CIS COUNTRIES AGAINST THE BACKGROUND OF FOREIGN PRACTICES

Nowadays, most of the world's population relies on natural resources and the environment for their normal livelihood and it was natural that a lot of workers' communities share fears that stronger environmental policies will lead to their income and job losses. However, perceptions of conflicting interests have changed over the years. Several studies, as well as practical experience, have clearly shown that changing production-consumption patterns and the introduction of new technologies will contribute to job creation. Successfully protecting the natural resource base will finally help to protect employment and fight poverty.²³

Despite the fact that labor unions are widespread in most of the developed and developing countries, union representation of workers has generally declined

²³ Yakel, Y.Y.; Perfilieva, E.V.; Telgerekova, A.C.; Maltseva, H.B. and Stepanenko, K.I.: *Guidelines for the Application of the Aarhus Convention in Russia*, Moscow, 2013.

over the past 30-40 years in most of them. The following processes mainly negatively affected the development of labor unions:

- the decline of the “old” industries - the traditional base of the labor union movement;
- the emergence of new high-tech sectors and flexible production with a reduced cycle;
- the formation of a new generation of qualified workforce with personal values and requests to change the gender structure and methods of performing tasks;
- the presence of mass unemployment and a total spread of non-standard forms of employment;

The last years of the existence of the USSR were marked by some intensification of the labor movement despite the official trade unions. In this view, there even appeared the new trade unions, capable of organizing rather large-scale collective actions and even influencing the policy of the authorities. A prime example is the emergence of the Independent Miners’ Union. However, this did not cause radical and general changes in the perception of people and organizational trade union culture. Moreover, some independent trade unions that emerged at the turn of the 1990s quickly fell under the influence of forces hostile to the interests of the workers degraded.²⁴

After the establishment of capitalist orders in Russia and other republics of the former USSR, the basis of the trade union movement was formed everywhere based on the old “state” trade unions, which have inherited the old culture and methods of work. In the context of a radical change in the socio-economic reality, the bulk of “labor unions” still remained a kind of “HR department” under the administration. The workers perceived the labor union as a kind of external “structure” from which they expected that it would solve for them all emerging problems, organize leisure, and also provide some “benefits”. Trade union dues were seen as a kind of payment for “services.” Some people stayed in the union due to tradition or as a demonstration of loyalty to the employer’s system. It is quite natural that in this state of affairs, the main set of tools of trade unions was limited to the use of administrative levers and connections, as well as courts and complaints. Holding full-scale strikes against an employer was considered out of the ordinary. “Social partnership”, “negotiating” with employers, and participation in various tripartite bodies with government

²⁴ Jovanovic, B. and Petreski, M.: *Monetary policy, exchange rates and labor unions in SEE and the CIS during the financial crisis*, Economic Systems, 38(3) 2014, [<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecosys.2013.12.005>], pp. 309-332; Kozina, I.: *Post-Soviet trade unions*, Otechestvennye Zapiski, 37 2007, pp.94-99.

officials, as well as legal advice have long become the formula for “trade union work” in the vast majority of trade unions. A feature of all these methods was that they did not provide for massive collective participation and collective actions of the workers themselves.²⁵

Some attempts to change the situation were made with the implementation of the Aarhus Convention in the legislation of post-Soviet countries, as one of the instruments for achieving the SDGs. Considering the Aarhus Convention as one of the instruments to achieve the SDGs, it should be noted that the main text of the Convention talks about how the public participation system should work in the case of some decision-making and policy-making processes. The main thrust of the Convention’s declarations is that public participation must be timely, effective, adequate, and formal and that it must be based on information, notification, dialogue, consideration, and response. At the national level, an understandable, open, and fair system of public participation in decision-making should be developed.²⁶ Russian legislation contains only individual elements of such a system, which are scattered across different legislative acts. But it should be noted that recently the efforts of the Russian government are aimed at including in the regulations of state services certain requirements for involving the public in the decision-making process on a variety of issues, not only in the field of environmental protection. In this context, trade unions are seen as a necessary agent for informing the public - an important stage in the public participation in the preparation and adoption of decisions based on the objectives of the Convention.²⁷

One of the first CIS countries to ratify this Convention was the Republic of Belarus, which adopted it in December 1999. Currently, it is part of the Belarusian legislation and its provisions are binding on all law enforcement agencies, officials, and citizens of the republic. During this time, the bulk of the legislation was adapted to the requirements of the convention. For example, following the provisions of Art. 4 of the Convention in 2007, amendments and additions were made to the law “On environmental protection” on the issue of access to environmental information, as well as the concept of “environmental information” was given, the composition, sources, and types of environmental information were determined. In 2009, the law of 10.11.2008 No. 455-Z “On

²⁵ Olimpiewa, I.: *Labor unions in contemporary Russia: An assessment of contrasting forms of organization and representation*, WorkingUSA, 15(2) 2012, [<https://doi.org/10.1163/17434580-01502007>], pp. 267-283.

²⁶ Yakel, Y.Y.; Perfilieva, E.V.; Telgerekova, A.C.; Maltseva, H.B. and Stepanenko, K.I.: *Guidelines for the Application of the Aarhus Convention in Russia*, Moscow, 2013.

²⁷ Yakel, Y.Y.; Perfilieva, E.V.; Telgerekova, A.C.; Maltseva, H.B. and Stepanenko, K.I.: *Guidelines for the Application of the Aarhus Convention in Russia*, Moscow, 2013.

information, informatization, and protection of information” came into force, which sets out the procedure for the dissemination and (or) provision of information, the rights, and obligations of subjects of information relations, responsibility for violating the requirements of the legislation on the information.²⁸ (Zakharova, 2013). With the adoption of the Convention, the Aarhus Center was established in the country in December 2005 within the framework of a joint project of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection of the Republic of Belarus and the OSCE Office in Minsk. This Center, among other things, is engaged in receiving and considering applications from citizens and organizations on environmental protection issues, as well as collecting, accumulating, storing, and disseminating environmental information, as well as its provision to interest parties.²⁹ At the same time, speaking of trade unions as an element of such a concept as civil society organizations, it should be noted that at this stage their functionality is very limited. In general, the scope and scope of advocacy vary greatly depending on the subject matter of the civil society organization. Thus, based on existing data, environmentalists in Belarus use the possibilities of the Aarhus Convention, which requires public discussions from the state, while other civil society organizations do not have mechanisms for institutional inclusion in state processes. In this case, advocacy often reaches its limit, when the high quality of campaigns does not lead to significant results due to political restrictions.³⁰

The Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context (Espoo Convention) plays an equally important role in achieving the environmental goals of sustainable development. At the same time, the role of trade unions in this issue and their interest should not be underestimated. There are prerequisites that at the global level, the interest and role of trade unions in policy issues related to the implementation of environmental impact assessment (EIA) is increasing. For example, in 2020, trade unions in India called on the government to withdraw the draft environmental impact assessment rules because it conflicts with India’s climate change commitments and the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals. The EIA 2020 project was highly controversial and identified legal problems. Unions have called it a major setback from 2006 regulations, as the project appears to be geared towards serving corporate interests in certain industries such as coal and other minerals.³¹

²⁸ [<https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/38548713.pdf>], accessed on 17/07/2021.

²⁹ [<http://aarhusbel.com/>], accessed on 17/07/2021.

³⁰ [<https://cyberleninka.ru/article/n/grazhdanskoe-obschestvo-mezhdu-repressiyami-i-sblizheniem-s-biznesom-1>], accessed on 13/01/2022.

³¹ [<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/unions-urges-pm-modi-to-withdraw-draft-eia-2020-rules/articleshow/77660838.cms>], accessed on 13/04/2021.

At the same time in Russia, problems are noted in the implementation of such forms of ensuring environmental rights as public environmental expertise and public hearings held within the framework of the EIA. In addition, at present, trade unions are not the subject of public environmental control (PEC), which is a legally established means to realize the environmental rights of citizens. Until 2002, the PEC was carried out by the trade unions of the Russian Federation, other public associations, labor collectives, and citizens and then they have been excluded from this list, as a result, society lost its independent institution which has been largely reflected the population's environmental interests.³²

The legal regulation of these forms of manifestation of the civic initiative is characterized by fragmentation. In practice, this leads to the fact that public environmental interests have a minor influence on making environmental management resolutions. Thus, due to the lack of clear legal requirements, the institution of public environmental expertise has not been widely used. For the same reason, many public hearings held within the framework of the EIA remain only a formal procedure necessary for the successful passage of the state environmental expertise.

Moreover, the key legal problem in the implementation of civil initiatives in the form of public environmental expertise and participation in public hearings is also the lack of terminological clarity in the legislation of such categories as “the public”, “interested public”, and “environmentally significant solutions”.³³

In many developed countries, there has been a reduction in the social base of unions, namely in the number of members and in financial resources. However, despite the fact that unions are weak in many areas, they continue to be an important force in the economic sphere. SDGs can also enter the business from the other side - when a company enters into a labor union agreement, which spells out the principles of sustainable development. A global framework agreement is concluded between global supranational companies and the same global international labor unions, which include the labor unions of the CIS countries. These are analogs of collective agreements, in which labor unions and employers agree on the main areas of cooperation.³⁴

³² Evgrafov, A.V.: Methodology of organization of engineering and environmental surveys for students of the directions “nature development and water use” and “ecology and nature use”, in *Collection of Reports of the All-Russian Conference with the Participation of the International Community “Russian Forum of Prospectors”*, Moscow, 2020, pp. 50-56.

³³ Edkova, T.A.; Chertkov, A.N. and Zyryanov, S.M.: *State and public institutions. Civil initiatives*, Journal of Russian Law, 11(203) 2013, pp. 111-122.

³⁴ Ruchyevskiy, I.: *Sustainable business plans: Why Russian companies need “green” UN goals, and who will check their environmental friendliness*, Ecology Law, 79 2020, pp. 42-47.

If one looks at the content of such agreements, it is noticeable that it goes far beyond the traditional labor union agenda as it appears. Environmental policy, gender equality, migrant rights, child labor prevention - all of these points correlate with a large number of SDGs, and not only with the Decent Work and Economic Growth Goal, which is usually associated with labor unions. Today, more than 300 such agreements have been concluded, that is, they cover a large number of international corporations that operate in Russia as well, thus affecting Russian workers. Thus, companies and labor unions agree on higher obligations than those stipulated by national legislation.³⁵

Official representatives of the Russian Federation responsible for the country's achievement of the SDGs at the national and international levels have repeatedly declared Russia's readiness to develop national and subnational SDG indicators, prepare, and share national reports, reflecting the results of the Russian Federation in achieving sustainable development on a regular basis.

According to the legislation of the Russian Federation on labor unions, the latter is endowed with certain rights in the field of environmental protection. Thus, article 20 of the Federal Law No. 10-FZ "On labor unions, their rights and guarantees of activity" stipulates that labor unions have the right to participate in the formation of state programs on labor protection and the environment, as well as in the development of regulatory legal and other acts regulating labor protection issues, occupational diseases, and environmental safety. In addition, labor unions exercise control over the state of labor and environmental protection. For these purposes, they have the following rights:

- to freely visit organizations, regardless of their form of ownership and subordination, their structural divisions, and workplaces where members of this labor union work;
- to participate in the investigation of accidents at work, protect the rights and interests of labor union members on working conditions and safety at work, compensation for harm caused to their health at work, as well as on other issues of labor and environmental protection.

Besides, article 13 of the same law establishes that labor unions, their associations, primary labor union organizations, and their bodies have the right to conduct collective bargaining, and conclude agreements and collective agreements on behalf of employees in accordance with federal law.

³⁵ Ruchyevskiy, I.: *Sustainable business plans: Why Russian companies need "green" UN goals, and who will check their environmental friendliness*, Ecology Law, 79 2020, pp. 42-47.

Thus, the right of labor unions to participate in Russia's environmental policy is considered at the highest levels. However, the problem of exercising these rights remains open.

The key document of medium-term strategic planning is the "Main directions of activities of the Government of the Russian Federation for the period up to 2024", adopted in September 2018.³⁶ The relevance of the implementation of the SDG targets in Russia is reflected in the President's Address to the Federal Assembly in 2018, as well as in the May Decree - of 2018. The tasks formulated in these documents in the following areas: health care; education; demography; housing and urban environment; international cooperation and export; ecology; digital economy, etc. - are correlated with the UN SDGs and it is extremely important to transform them into strategic planning documents.

President Putin's May Decree 2018 sets several environmental tasks for the government, in particular, to reduce emissions of pollutants in large industrial cities. However, the document does not contain any mention of risks and threats directly related to global climate change processes and their negative impact inside Russian territory.

As for the rights of labor unions in the Republic of Belarus, the Law of the Republic of Belarus "On Labor Unions" No. 1605-XII provides for a less extensive range of rights in the field of environmental protection. Thus, Article 18 of this Law establishes that labor unions:

- manage the sanatorium-resort and health-improving organizations in their ownership (jurisdiction);
- help with their monetary and other material resources in the creation and organization of work of sanatorium-preventoriums, recreation centers, and health camps belonging to the organizations;
- participate in the development of mass physical culture, sports, and tourism.

Article 19 of the Law provides for the right of labor unions only to inspect the state of labor protection.

Concerning collective agreements, which could be a tool for adaptation to the SDGs in the field of ecology, Belarusian legislation provides only the right of labor unions (labor union associations), and their organizational structures to bargain collectively, and conclude collective agreements under the legislation of the Republic of Belarus. Thus, the labor unions of Belarus are deprived of initiatives to develop state policy or introduce standards and norms for pro-

³⁶ Government of the Russian Federation: *Main Directions of Activity of the Government of the Russian Federation until September 29, 2024*, Moscow, 2018.

duction greening into legislation. Their rights remained at the level of Soviet times.

In Kazakhstan, in contrast to the previous two examples, a new law “On Labor Unions” was adopted in 2014, which, among other things, provides for the right of labor unions to participate in the development of regulatory legal acts affecting labor and social rights and interests of citizens, including on employment issues. In addition, following Article 19 of the Law, labor unions participate in social partnership by working in tripartite republican, sectoral, and regional commissions on social partnership and regulation of social and labor relations; developing draft agreements and collective agreements and their conclusion. As one may note, in Kazakhstan, trade unions are endowed with a wide range of rights to participate in state policy at the highest level, they can take part in the development of regulations, but their role in adapting to the SDGs remains insignificant, which, in particular, is confirmed by the Voluntary National Review on the Implementation of the SDGs.³⁷ Nevertheless, Kazakhstan declares quite ambitious goals in the field of achieving the SDGs, and the coverage of the latter with strategic and program documents is 79.9%. In addition, the country has an appropriate regulatory framework for the implementation of the participation of NGOs in the implementation of environmental policy and environmental goals within the SDGs. Environmental protection is enshrined in the Constitution of the Republic of Kazakhstan as one of the goals of the state.

In the Environmental Code of the Republic of Kazakhstan, adopted in 2007, Articles 13 and 14 stipulate the rights of individuals and public organizations to have access to environmental information and access to justice in matters relating to environmental protection. In 2015, the Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan “On Access to Information” was adopted, which regulates the exercise of the constitutional right of everyone to freely receive and disseminate information in any way not prohibited by law.³⁸

Since 2000, Kazakhstan has been a party to the Aarhus Convention. In 2001, the republic joined the Espoo Convention.³⁹

³⁷ [https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/23453KAZAKHSTAN_VNR_Kazakhstan_web_site_2019.pdf], accessed on 13/01/2022.

³⁸ [<https://carececo.org/%D0%9E%D0%91%D0%97%D0%9E%D0%A0%20%D0%AD%D0%9A%D0%9E%D0%9B%D0%9E%D0%93%D0%98%D0%A7%D0%95%D0%A1%D0%9A%D0%98%D0%A5%20%D0%9D%D0%9F%D0%9E%20%D0%92%20%D0%A0%D0%9A.pdf>] accessed on 13/01/2022.

³⁹ [<https://cyberleninka.ru/article/n/obespechenie-dostupa-k-ekologicheskoy-informatsii-v-respublike-kazakhstan-rol-orhusskoy-konventsii>], accessed on 13/01/2022; [https://ecogofond.kz/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/expo_ru2015-2016.pdf], accessed on 13/01/2022.

In 2016, on the eve of the VII Civil Forum, a report “On the state of NGOs in the Republic of Kazakhstan: problems and prospects” was prepared, which provides data from studies conducted among 280 NGOs from various regions of Kazakhstan. Based on the data obtained, the report notes that the environmental direction is not a priority for any organization.⁴⁰ The document gives a fairly comprehensive picture of the current state of involvement of NGOs in environmental policy. If until 2014 it was possible to talk about the involvement of environmental NGOs in the decision-making process at the state level, taking into account public opinion in the development of the environmental policy of the state, at present, environmental NGOs do not always have information about changes and additions made to certain regulatory -legal documents. For example, in 2016, information that changes are being made to the environmental code, and the rules for holding public hearings, was sent only to Aarhus centers. When preparing the National Report on the implementation of the Aarhus Convention, public comments were also not taken into account.⁴¹ In July 2019, within the framework of the UN High-Level Political Forum, Kazakhstan presented its first Voluntary National Review on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. The document notes the growing political and legal efforts of the state and business in achieving the SDGs. The development of environmental reporting of companies and the introduction of the principles of sustainable development at the corporate level are noted. The document notes that the reporting in the field of corporate social responsibility, as well as the reporting of companies on sustainable development within the framework of the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI), is gradually developing. At the same time, the Report contains only indirect references to the role of NGOs in achieving the environmental components of the SDGs in the country, and information on the role of trade unions in this process is completely absent. However, it should be noted that in 2022 Kazakhstan will present the Voluntary National Review at the high-level political forum on sustainable development. The purpose of the national report is to provide an independent assessment of the progress achieved in the implementation of the SDGs in Kazakhstan.⁴²

⁴⁰ [<https://carececo.org/%D0%9E%D0%91%D0%97%D0%9E%D0%A0%20%D0%AD%D0%9A%D0%9E%D0%9B%D0%9E%D0%93%D0%98%D0%A7%D0%95%D0%A1%D0%9A%D0%98%D0%A5%20%D0%9D%D0%9F%D0%9E%20%D0%92%20%D0%A0%D0%9A.pdf>] accessed on 13/01/2022.

⁴¹ [<https://carececo.org/%D0%9E%D0%91%D0%97%D0%9E%D0%A0%20%D0%AD%D0%9A%D0%9E%D0%9B%D0%9E%D0%93%D0%98%D0%A7%D0%95%D0%A1%D0%9A%D0%98%D0%A5%20%D0%9D%D0%9F%D0%9E%20%D0%92%20%D0%A0%D0%9A.pdf>] accessed on 13/01/2022.

⁴² [https://economy.kz/ru/Celi_ustojchivogo_razvitija/Nacionalnyj_otchet/], accessed on 13/01/2022.

It can be stated that the role of labor unions in the CIS countries in the context of the transition to sustainable development is seen primarily in strengthening control over the observance by entrepreneurs of social obligations in labor protection, promoting the preservation of the environment, in such development of enterprises and organizations that would meet the sustainability criteria.

The considered cases contrast with foreign examples, where the role of trade unions in the formation of policies to achieve the SDGs is rather proactive rather than auxiliary.

The national labor union reports identify challenges with current approaches to implementing the 2030 Agenda at the national level. Labor unions have made recommendations to their governments and adapted to their national circumstances.⁴³ For example, Finnish labor unions are calling on their government to ensure that the implementation of the SDGs leads to meaningful policy changes with a focus on social development. They propose to achieve this by:

- setting specific policy goals;
- developing reliable tools for their implementation;
- allocation of appropriate funds.⁴⁴

Talking about the role of trade unions in a developed country like Finland, it should be noted that in this country the labor movement is an integral part of society. Three out of every four employees belong to a trade union in their industry or profession. In a country of five million people, there are nearly one hundred trade unions with over two million members. Finnish law guarantees the right of an employee to be a member of a trade union. This right cannot be limited by any agreements.⁴⁵

Using as an example the EU state, an association that is rightfully the “flagship” of the SDG concept, and progressive approaches to labor relations of one of its members, which is Finland (health policy in the world of work, etc.)⁴⁶ it would

⁴³ TUDCN/ITUC: *A Trade Union Take on The SDGs*, Trade Union Development Cooperation Network, 2018.

⁴⁴ Independent Group of Scientists: *Global Sustainable Development Report 2019: The Future is now – Science for Achieving Sustainable Development*, United Nations, 2019.

⁴⁵ [https://www.ilo.org/ifpdial/information-resources/national-labour-law-profiles/WCMS_158896/lang--en/index.htm], accessed on 13/04/2021; [https://www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/natlex4.detail%3Fp_lang%3Den%26p_isn%3D58905%26p_classification%3D12.01], accessed on 13/04/2021.

⁴⁶ Pfau-Effinger, B.: *Modernisation, culture and part-time employment: the example of Finland and West Germany*, Work, Employment and Society, 7(3) 1993, [<https://doi.org/10.1177%2F095001709373003>], pp. 383-410.

be interesting to draw attention to the example of Japan, which is in some way a contrast to European models of labor relations. An important aspect of the Japanese corporate style is the existence of trade unions in companies, where membership of all employees is almost mandatory. But workers do not have separate employment outside the company. Despite the state organization of trade unions, the aforementioned ones do not exist as separate or competing units with companies. The connection between the employer and workers imposes some restrictions on the independent action of trade unions. Moreover, employees are unwilling to harm the economic well-being of the company, so some events like strikes are extremely rare and usually short-lived.⁴⁷

At the same time, the priority recommendation of the Japanese labor union (JTUC-RENGO) to the Japanese government is to promote social dialogue based on a strong commitment to workers' rights such as freedom of association and collective bargaining. For this, the labor unions call for:

- implementation of the ILO's Decent Work Agenda by creating jobs, ensuring respect for workers' rights, social protection, etc.;
- implementation of the SDG Action Plan in consultation with various stakeholders, including labor unions and economic organizations.⁴⁸
- Unions in Spain are calling on their government to ensure that its work plan to implement the SDGs is effectively implemented through:
- streamlining work and improving coordination between different ministries and national, territorial, and local administrations;
- consultations with civil society, including with social partners, which allows them to receive information on the status of the SDGs implementation;
- allocating additional and adequate resources for the SDGs policy implementation by individual departments.⁴⁹

While these recommendations are specific to conditions and implementation approaches in individual countries, several unifying trends can be noted in the area of adaptation to SDGs. Most of the recommendations fall into two broad

⁴⁷ Vogel, S.K.: *Japan's labor regime in transition: Rethinking work for a shrinking nation*, The Journal of Japanese Studies, 44(2) 2018, [<https://doi.org/10.1353/jjs.2018.0039>], pp. 257-292.

⁴⁸ TUDCN/ITUC: *A Trade Union Take on The SDGs*, Trade Union Development Cooperation Network, 2018.

⁴⁹ Independent Group of Scientists: *Global Sustainable Development Report 2019: The Future is now – Science for Achieving Sustainable Development*, United Nations, 2019.

categories: recommendations on how to better integrate the 2030 Agenda into national policies, and recommendations to improve the conditions for engaging with stakeholders. In addition, some recommendations are focused on strengthening monitoring provisions, building the capacity of various actors, and enhancing accountability. Some recommendations highlighted the need for further internal coordination between the various responsible ministries. In addition, many countries did not have specific budgetary allocations for the implementation process, which was considered important for the integration of the 2030 Agenda at the national level.⁵⁰

In terms of forms of engagement, unions in the aforementioned countries have called for a rights-based approach to formulating and implementing public policies. The integration of social dialogue as a mechanism for managing the implementation process has been repeatedly put forward as a model for achieving this goal. A common trend was their declaration of commitment to the multistakeholder approach and a call on governments to integrate inclusive consultation provisions in policy formulation, implementation, and monitoring. Beyond these categories, unions have proposed ways to strengthen monitoring and accountability provisions and build the capacity of key stakeholders, including governments.

4. DISCUSSION

Initially, it would be reasonable to answer the question of whether the SDGs require appropriate adaptation of legislation in the field of regulation of labor legal relations. Thus, speaking of the legal status of the document adopted at the United Nations summit “Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”, it should be noted that it is not binding.⁵¹ This, in turn, apparently does not imply the need to adapt national legislation to the SDG.⁵²

In this context, the following should be noted. The EU traditionally assumes a leadership role in the SDGs. According to the Commission’s Communication 2016 “Next Steps for a Sustainable European Future: European Action for

⁵⁰ TUDCN/ITUC: *A Trade Union Take on The SDGs*, Trade Union Development Cooperation Network, 2018.

⁵¹ United Nations: *Transforming Our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. Department of Economic and Social Affairs, United Nations, 2015.

⁵² Rabinovych, M.: *Where economic development meets the rule of law? Promoting sustainable development goals through the European neighborhood policy*, Brill Open Law, 2(1) 2020, [<https://doi.org/10.1163/23527072-20191017>], pp. 140-174.

Sustainability”, the EU is fully committed to leading the way in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. The EU’s commitment to the 2030 Agenda is reaffirmed by the 2017 New European Development Consensus, which structurally reflects the 2030 Agenda.

Despite the emphasis on the relationship between the goals in the Vision section, the Agenda hardly mentions such interaction in its main body. Likewise, goals and indicators related to the SDGs are specific and the goals do not share common goals or indicators.⁵³

The declarative nature of the Agenda has been criticized on several occasions, noting, in particular, the contradictions related to indicators and the assessment of the effectiveness of implementation. In addition, criticism has been associated with both setting conflicting goals and trying to present Millennium Development Goals in a sophisticated form, instead of focusing on the most urgent or fundamental priorities.⁵⁴

In this context, it should be noted that many countries, in particular the CIS countries, although formally committed to the SDGs (which, among other things, is noted in the corresponding voluntary reviews on SDGs), however, as evidenced by this study, there are no significant initiatives to implement the SDGs in no legislation were enacted. In this case, the matter is the same – both about declarative norms and directly about implementation mechanisms. Herewith, it should be mentioned that this does not in any way diminish the role of SDG either globally or regionally. Concerning the relationship between trade unions and environmental protection, it should be noted that such a relationship exists, but it is usually defined as a direct relationship, outside the SDGs. Thus, at the current stage, it is difficult to say whether the trade union movement shares environmental goals within the SDGs and beyond them. The example of Russia suggests that the trade union movement in this country is generally involved and interested in solving environmental issues, but so far it is difficult to talk about any significant interaction between trade union actors and the government within the framework of the SDGs. Concern about envi-

⁵³ Rabinovych, M.: *Where economic development meets the rule of law? Promoting sustainable development goals through the European neighborhood policy*, Brill Open Law, 2(1) 2020, [<https://doi.org/10.1163/23527072-20191017>], pp. 140-174.

⁵⁴ Koelmans, A.A.; Nor, N.H.M.; Hermsen, E.; Kooi, M.; Mintenig, S.M. and De France, J.: *Microplastics in freshwaters and drinking water: Critical review and assessment of data quality*, Water Research, 155 2019, [<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.watres.2019.02.054>], pp. 410-422; Mair, S.; Jones, A.; Ward, J.; Christie, I.; Druckman, A. and Lyon, F.: A critical review of the role of indicators in implementing the sustainable development goals, in *Handbook of Sustainability Science and Research*, Springer International Publishing, 2018, [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-63007-6_3], pp. 41-56.

ronmental issues is expressed by the Federation of Independent Trade Unions of Russia. So, in particular, the Federation notes that Russia's environmental problems are interconnected with global environmental problems. One of the most serious internal challenges, the solution of which has a direct and negative impact on the level and quality of life of people, is the elimination of past environmental damage. As the aforementioned organization notes the sad consequence is not only the deterioration of the ecological situation but the fact that the accumulated pollution has a negative impact on the rate of economic growth.⁵⁵

In Russia, for instance, the level of civil society development remains rather low.⁵⁶ Although many active social activists still support those entities, including environmental ones. In this regard, the implementation of state environmental projects at all levels requires mandatory public participation. Strengthening the role of public organizations is also possible through the creation of supervisory boards within them, as well as the involvement of public experts in the formation of state programs.⁵⁷

At the same time, speaking about the initiatives of the trade union organizations, the Federation of Independent Trade Unions notes that today they are mainly reduced to educational work. Although there are also preventive measures such as conducting a mandatory environmental impact assessment, landscaping, etc.⁵⁸

According to the Voluntary National Review of the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, there is only one engagement with trade unions under the SDGs. At the same time, this interaction is carried out by the efforts of the non-governmental organization "Eco-Accord". The program of this organization includes information activities to strengthen capacity, and exchange experience to take advantage of the countries' participation in the international trading system, reduce negative consequences, as well as more effective participation in negotiations within the WTO.⁵⁹

⁵⁵ Federation of Independent Labor Unions of Russia: *Information on the results of the Days of Protection against Environmental Hazard in 2016*, Moscow, 2016.

⁵⁶ Posulchenko, V.A.: *Environmental lobbyism as an indicator of civil society development*, PolitBook, 2 2020, pp. 24-41, [<https://cyberleninka.ru/article/n/ekologicheskii-lobbizm-kak-indikator-razvitiya-grazhdanskogo-obschestva>], accessed on 13/01/2022.

⁵⁷ Federation of Independent Labor Unions of Russia: *Information on the results of the Days of Protection against Environmental Hazard in 2016*, Moscow, 2016.

⁵⁸ Federation of Independent Labor Unions of Russia: *Information on the results of the Days of Protection against Environmental Hazard in 2016*, Moscow, 2016.

⁵⁹ Analytical Center for the Government of the Russian Federation: *Voluntary National Review of the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, Moscow, 2020.

Belarus to date has not provided relevant documents similar to the Russian Voluntary National Review, based on the degree of analytical coverage. Official web sources also do not contain relevant information on this matter.⁶⁰ The previous document National Report of the Republic of Belarus on the Implementation of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda is dated 2017 and does not contain data on the role of trade unions in achieving the SDGs.⁶¹

At this stage, the country has a Roadmap of the National Statistical Committee of the Republic of Belarus for the development of statistics on the SDGs. At the same time, having statistical data on the number of appeals of trade union bodies would make it possible to get a better idea of the role of trade unions in achieving the SDGs in Belarus. Thus, today it remains to be said that trade unions in the republic have formal instruments, presented in the form of international environmental agreements, to carry out activities on the SDGs. However, at the moment it is not possible to trace the connection of the limited environmental initiatives of trade union organizations in Belarus with the SDGs. Currently, the international cooperation of Belarus on the SDGs is exacerbated by tensions in foreign policy relations.⁶²

A similar characterization regarding the role of trade unions in achieving the SDGs in the area of environmental protection applies to Kazakhstan. Despite the existence of an appropriate regulatory framework, law enforcement mechanisms and the country's overall commitment to achieving the SDGs in the field of environmental protection, the activity of environmental NGOs is very low. At the same time, the number of NGOs dealing with environmental issues shows a downward trend.⁶³ One of the reasons for the weak interaction between non-governmental actors and the state at the international and national levels may be the lack of financial, as well as information, and expert support. In this context, the role of trade unions looks even less significant.⁶⁴ At pres-

⁶⁰ [https://www.belstat.gov.by/ofitsialnaya-statistika/SDG/Naz_perechen_pokas_SDG/], accessed on 13/01/2022.

⁶¹ [<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/16357Belarus.pdf>], accessed on 13/01/2022.

⁶² [https://www.belstat.gov.by/ofitsialnaya-statistika/SDG/Naz_perechen_pokas_SDG/], accessed on 13/01/2022.

⁶³ [<https://carececo.org/%D0%9E%D0%91%D0%97%D0%9E%D0%A0%20%D0%AD%D0%9A%D0%9E%D0%9B%D0%9E%D0%93%D0%98%D0%A7%D0%95%D0%A1%D0%9A%D0%98%D0%A5%20%D0%9D%D0%9F%D0%9E%20%D0%92%20%D0%A0%D0%9A.pdf>] accessed on 13/01/2022.

⁶⁴ [<https://carececo.org/%D0%9E%D0%91%D0%97%D0%9E%D0%A0%20%D0%AD%D0%9A%D0%9E%D0%9B%D0%9E%D0%93%D0%98%D0%A7%D0%95%D0%A1%D0%9A%D0%98%D0%A5%20%D0%9D%D0%9F%D0%9E%20%D0%92%20%D0%A0%D0%9A.pdf>] accessed on 13/01/2022.

ent, the role of the trade union movement in achieving the SDGs is apparently completely leveled, which is well illustrated by the Voluntary National Review on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, where they are completely absent.⁶⁵ At the same time, at the moment, trade unions in the Republic of Kazakhstan are rarely considered a proactive actors in the formation of policy, and their role is reduced to protecting the labor rights of workers.⁶⁶

While in CIS interaction with trade union organizations within the framework of SDGs is rather rare, in the EU almost all representatives of civil society are involved in this process, incl. trade unions, which undoubtedly affects the social dialogue development for building a consensus that supports policy implementation.⁶⁷

Trade unions seek to strengthen accountability in the implementation process and strengthen collaboration with other stakeholders. They provide independent monitoring of the key SDGs, prioritizing workers' priorities at the national level.⁶⁸ By assessing implementation through transparency, consultation, and social dialogue, unions assess whether key requirements for an inclusive approach are being met.⁶⁹

There are several countries where the SDGs are being achieved by trade unions, which are affected by local production and employment and environmental component:

- Japan's JTUC-RENGO: promoting policies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and strike a balance between environmental protection and economic growth;⁷⁰

⁶⁵ [https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/23453KAZAKHSTAN_VNR_Kazakhstan_web_site_2019.pdf], accessed on 13/01/2022.

⁶⁶ Nurgalieva, E.N. and Toleukhanova, D.B.: *Problems of modernization of trade union legislation in the Republic of Kazakhstan*, Science and Peace, 1(3) 2015, pp. 113-116, [https://www.elibrary.ru/download/elibrary_23102683_59874856.pdf], accessed on 13/01/2022.

⁶⁷ Dorsch, M.J. and Flachslund, C.: *A polycentric approach to global climate governance*, Global Environmental Politics, 17(2) 2017, [https://doi.org/10.1162/GLEP_a_00400], pp. 45-64.

⁶⁸ Gellers, J.C.: *Crowdsourcing global governance: sustainable development goals, civil society, and the pursuit of democratic legitimacy*, International Environmental Agreements: Politics, Law and Economics, 16(3) 2016, [<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10784-016-9322-0>], pp. 415-432.

⁶⁹ Noori, H.: *Community participation in sustainability of development projects: a case study of national solidarity program Afghanistan*, Journal of culture, Society and Development, 30 2017, pp. 1-12.

⁷⁰ Schneider, F.; Kläy, A.; Zimmermann, A.B.; Buser, T.; Ingalls, M. and Messerli, P.: *How can science support the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development? Four tasks to tackle*

- Committee on Climate Change of the Confederation of British Industry involved in the guidelines development for enhancing skills in science, technology, and engineering, as well as improving government regulations and procedures in line with the fundamental ILO conventions;⁷¹
- Balkans/Serbia: In 2009, the newly adopted laws in the field of environmental protection for the first-time defined obligations for large waste generators and other waste disposal companies using a collection and recycling system.⁷²
- CIS: the progressively emerging recycling plants are demonstrating significant potential in the field of decent work, as well as in the creation of an entire industry of new jobs with the potential to merge with existing employers' organizations, thus strengthening their position in the tripartite social dialogue.
- Spain: establishing and activity of the Social Dialogue Initiative as a valuable tool for labor unions and industrial, environmental, and employment agencies to jointly assess the impact of the Kyoto Protocol on competitiveness, employment, and social cohesion⁷³ through the implementation of the concept of "green" jobs in state and municipal labor institutions.⁷⁴

The positioning of industries in the spectrum of sustainability⁷⁵ has been critical for the effectiveness of these activities since corporate culture is one of the main factors not only in the overall strategy but also in the implementation of sustainable development initiatives.⁷⁶ Unfortunately, given the current rapid and significant conditions of global change (in the environmental, social, economic, and technological areas), compliance with minimum standards is

the normative dimension of sustainability, Sustainability Science, 14(6) 2019, [<https://doi.org/10.1007/s11625-019-00675-y>], pp. 1593-1604.

⁷¹ Nilsson, M.: *Important Interactions among the Sustainable Development Goals under Review at the High-Level Political Forum 2017*. Nis. Working paper, Stockholm, 2017.

⁷² Zondervan, R.: *The scientific and technological community in the sustainable development goal process*, Environmental Scientist, 26(3) 2017, pp. 34-37.

⁷³ Gupta, J. and Vegelin, C.: *Sustainable development goals and inclusive development*, International Environmental Agreements: Politics, Law and Economics, 16(3) 2016, [<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10784-016-9323-z>], pp. 433-448.

⁷⁴ Renda, A.: *How can sustainable development goals be 'mainstreamed' in the EU's better regulation agenda?*, CEPS Policy Insights, 12 2017, pp. 17-21.

⁷⁵ Seager, T.P.: *The sustainability spectrum and the sciences of sustainability*, Business Strategy and the Environment, 17(7) 2008, [<https://doi.org/10.1002/bse.632>], pp. 444-453.

⁷⁶ Cole, D.H.: *Advantages of a polycentric approach to climate change policy*, Nature Climate Change, 5(2) 2015, [<https://doi.org/10.1038/nclimate2490>], pp. 114-118.

no longer enough, and social, market, and regulatory factors are forcing companies to act more socially and environmentally responsible.⁷⁷ In this case, labor unions must adapt to the current situation and take on the role of not just a mediator in the employee-employer relationship, but be socially active, putting forward their initiatives that would fit the new standards provided for by the SDGs.

Traditional business approaches focus on economic activity, often at the expense of the environment and society, which are fundamental to their work.⁷⁸ Thus, social and environmental factors are at the core of not only the SDGs but also the broader discussion of sustainability issues. The evolution of the role of business suggests that corporate philosophy and business activities can no longer be focused only on economic factors, but are also inextricably linked to social and ecological ones.⁷⁹

5. CONCLUSION

Difficulties regarding the study of the role of trade union organizations of the CIS countries in the development and implementation of environmental policy, the role in achieving SDGs, and the implementation of international environmental agreements are largely due to the objective decline in the role of post-Soviet trade unions associated with the economic and political transformations in these countries, which led to the fact that the attention of policymakers in this direction was minimized. At the same time, in Western countries, on the contrary, the role of trade unions has expanded to areas that were not typical for them before, however, requiring such expansion, which, in turn, became an additional guarantee and leverage of civil society influence on the implementation of environmental protection policies.

An analysis of the tasks and activities for the implementation of the SDGs in the field of ecology reflected in the national conceptual and strategic documents of the CIS member-states, shows that there are real, well-founded reasons for increasing the tangibility of the effects of achieving the SDGs based

⁷⁷ Dunaev, O.I. and Nagornov, V.A.: *Harmonization of corporate social responsibility practice to achieve sustainable development goals*, Public-Private Partnership, 4(2) 2017, pp. 93-102.

⁷⁸ Dernbach, J.C. and Mintz, J.A.: *Environmental laws and sustainability: An introduction*, Sustainability, 3 2011, [<https://doi.org/10.3390/su3030531>], p. 531.

⁷⁹ Westley, F.; Olsson, P.; Folke, C.; Homer-Dixon, T.; Vredenburg, H.; Loorbach, D.; Thompson, J.; Nilsson, M.; Lambin, E.; Sendzimir, J.; Banerjee, B.; Galaz, V. and Van der Leeuw, S.: *Tipping toward sustainability: emerging pathways of transformation*, Ambio, 40(7) 2011, [<https://doi.org/10.1007/s13280-011-0186-9>], pp. 762-780.

on organic subtotals that incorporate the right balance of social, economic and environmental aspects of sustainable development. The best option would be to adopt a single comprehensive strategy, including both national priorities and sectoral objectives. However, the same circumstance characterizes the fact that in the CIS countries critically little attention is paid to the role of labor unions in creating a favorable legal environment for them to expand the tools of their actions (scope of authority) concerning the SDGs related to environmental protection. The substitution of the concepts of “formal trade union” and “trade union in its original understanding” that took place in the CIS countries created significant obstacles for these structures to become effective participants in joint efforts toward achieving the SDGs.

The study gives grounds to assert that the trade union organizations of the CIS countries, to a certain degree, resort to using the mechanisms of international environmental agreements as tools for achieving the SDGs. However, such application, as a rule, relies on limited national legal mechanisms, while international agreements are used by trade union movements only indirectly, which is also political in nature, reflected in the obvious lack of elaboration of mechanisms for realizing the rights of trade unions to participate in environmental protection issues.

In the CIS countries, the participation of labor unions in the development of national programs and the implementation of the SDGs, unfortunately, remains practically unnoticed. Their role in production greening, discussing, and deciding on the setting of strategic goals is limited due to legislative obstacles that do not provide labor unions with the same range of rights as in developed countries. At the same time, by strengthening the high-level political forum, labor unions call on their governments to make concrete commitments to reform the mechanisms for monitoring and revising the 2030 Agenda, to introduce a real SDG monitoring process based on the political forum at the highest and regional levels and meaningful, transparent and democratic dialogue with civil society.

In the ILO’s view, the 2030 Agenda is a central theme of transforming the world of work to make it environmentally, socially, and economically sustainable, with decent work defined as both a means and an aim. World experience has proven that the development of the labor union movement has a positive effect on the implementation of the mechanism of social partnership. In the CIS countries, although labor unions do not yet play a large role in the development and implementation of national programs in the field of ecology, as well as adaptation to sustainable development goals, their participation in these processes may become more visible if they go beyond the established post-Soviet understanding of their functions. By concluding agreements with employers and government agencies, while defending the interests of workers, labor unions

will be able to participate in the development of national strategies and policies with the aim of finding a more civilized solution to environmental issues.

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