

## Bulgaria: empowering base-level trade union leaders to ensure growth in membership numbers

### Abstract

*This article outlines the empowerment of base-level trade union leaders in the agricultural sector in Bulgaria as an innovative strategy towards attracting new members and retaining existing ones. The approach has been adopted by the Federation of Independent Trade Unions in Agriculture (FNSZ) with the aim of creating proactive union structures that not only defend workers' interests but also engage in meaningful initiatives defined by the members themselves. Empowering workers to interact and to deal with such topics positions unions at the heart of civil society. Thus organising can be initiated through base-level structures and a bottom-up organising strategy can complement the top-down strategy already applied within FNSZ. The empowerment of members has already contributed to some positive outcomes and is believed to be a major weapon against a spreading individualist workplace culture and stagnating membership figures over the last decade. Information for this article has been gathered through desk research and an in-depth interview with the chair of FNSZ.*

**Keywords:** *organising, trade union membership, collective organisation, empowerment,*

### Introduction

Following the fall of the socialist regime in 1989, union membership sharply decreased (ImproCollBar Project 2023). However, the density rate differs from sector to sector leading to discrepancies in terms of bargaining power and the existence of sectoral agreements. Among the sectors most severely affected by the falling number of trade union members is agriculture, where specific work and employment patterns in the sector make it difficult to organise.

Despite these negative developments, there is a union federation within agriculture that has stabilised its membership numbers and even achieved some progress in gaining new members during the 2020s. This article aims to analyse the practices of attracting and retaining union members currently applied by Federatsia na nezavisimite sindikati ot zemedeliето (FNSZ; Federation of Independent Trade Unions in Agriculture). To achieve this goal, the authors used both desk research analysis and a semi-structured in-depth interview with the chair of FNSZ.

Through a literature review, the overall context of industrial relations in the country is first described, following which a specific focus is put on the agriculture sector and its problems in terms of organising and bargaining. The article concludes after the development of a consideration of FNSZ's organising practices.

## Industrial relations in Bulgaria

The industrial relations scene in Bulgaria currently includes seven key players at national level: two trade union confederations and five employer organisations were recognised as nationally representative after the last census in 2020 (KNSB 2021). The census procedure for the recognition of social partner representativity is conducted once every four years, with the social partners proving their representative status through a counting of their members. Trade unions must have at least 50,000 members spread across one-quarter of economic activities in the country to pass the census threshold. Once approved as nationally representative bodies, unions have the right to interact with the state in order to regulate labour and insurance relationships alongside any issue concerning the standard of living. To do so, they use the main body for consultation and cooperation; that is, the *Natsionalen soviet za tristranno sutrudnichestvo* (NSTS; National Council for Tripartite Cooperation). Tripartism also exists at sectoral and regional/municipal level.

Over the years, there have been significant changes in the legal provisions concerning the representativity criteria. The most recent amendments, in 2016, allowed for a lower entry threshold for unions while raising the threshold for employer organisations (Hristov 2016). The new census procedure was announced in July 2024 and continued until the following November (BNR 2024). Months before the start of the procedure, KT ‘Podkrepa’ (Confederation of Labour ‘Podkrepa’) grew alarmed that some amendments had been proposed which increased the legal entry thresholds for unions. This was perceived as a threat and as leading to the elimination of nationally representative unions (KT ‘Podkrepa’ 2024) at a time when employment rates were stagnating and restructuring processes were underway in the energy sector. Due to the requirements of the Green Deal, thousands of workers are threatened with the loss of their jobs. The energy sector is highly unionised and unions are now mapping the skills and qualifications of their members with a view to providing them with new employment opportunities. The re-employment of redundant union members can sustain labour market participation rates in the affected regions (KNSB 2024a).

In the context of the recurring national debates on the representativity criteria and of the impending dismissals within highly unionised workplaces, unions are being pushed towards adopting more efficient organising strategies in order to sustain membership numbers and assist them in the future to surpass the minimum census threshold.

Data on union density and the collective bargaining coverage rate suggests that organising actions are urgently required. Between 1990 and 1998, the collective bargaining coverage rate ranged between 60 % and 70 %, given the existence of sectoral collective agreements covering most economic activities. Since 2000, however, there has been a sharp decline, with the overall coverage rate stabilising after 2008 at a level of around 30 % although major sectoral differences can be found: in 2022, the brewery sector has a 100 % coverage rate; water supply and sewage about 78 % and education about 67 %. In contrast, some sectors – such as construction and hotels and restaurants cannot attain even a 2 % coverage rate (ImproCollBar Project 2023). The coverage rate across all activities in the agriculture sector (NACE 01–03) is 12 % while in agriculture alone (NACE 01) it is 8 % (FNSZ 2023).

The 2022 union density rate in Bulgaria is estimated to be 15 %, declining from over 80 % in the early 1990s. This is due to some difficulties in organising certain sectors, types of companies (including small and micro enterprises) and particular population groups (young people) (ImproCollBar Project 2023).

### Organising challenges in the Bulgarian agricultural sector

Konfederatsia na nezavisimite sindikati v Bulgaria (KNSB; Confederation of Independent Trade Unions in Bulgaria) is the umbrella organisation which associates 34 sectoral federations and unions. One of these is FNSZ, which was established in April 1990 as the successor to a longstanding trade union in agriculture and forestry dating back to the 19th century. In the last few years, FNSZ has managed to record some increase in the number of its base (company-level) union structures after years of declining trade union power among agriculture workers. The agricultural sector has undergone significant transformation since the 1990s with the deindustrialisation of rural areas and the privatisation of production sites. The sector used to have more than 700 000 people employed on labour contracts in the 90s, although the current number has dropped to about 60 000 (FNSZ 2020) which, inevitably, has had an impact on union membership figures as well.

The sector tends to be hard to unionise due to sector-specific work and employment patterns. About 90 % of agriculture farms are small (farming up to ten hectares of land), with a very low number of employees since most are typically run by family workers. Not surprisingly, almost 90 % of those who are employed in the sector are self-employed and family workers; formal employees constitute the remaining 10 % with these being targeted by unions which do not represent the self-employed or own account workers in Bulgaria (FNSZ 2020). The major part of the union's membership is concentrated in the public sector organisations which implement national agricultural policies; trade union organisations in private sector enterprises represent just a fraction of FNSZ member structures. One of the reasons for this is the application of temporary seasonal work arrangements along with undeclared work<sup>1</sup> during the harvesting season. Low union penetration is also related to the process mechanisation stemming from attempts to optimise workplace utilisation.

In the early 1990s, FNSZ represented 672 000 trade union members across 2,356 trade union organisations. Subsequent structural reforms led to huge layoffs in the sector. In 2020, FNSZ encompasses about 4,645 workers spread across 103 trade unions (compared to 4,785 workers in 108 trade unions in 2016). Currently, the membership number reaches over 5,000 members, while the coverage rate of collective bargaining within unionised agriculture organisations is almost 100 %. Despite

1 Significant progress towards tackling undeclared work in agriculture can be observed. Thanks to the 2015 amendments to the labour code, one-day labour contracts can be offered by registered farmers. These contracts can be easily accessed online and used for hiring workers for between four and eight hours per day (FNSZ 2018). FNSZ is also contributing to the tackling of undeclared work through a number of initiatives. At EU level, FNSZ uses a range of alliances to inform seasonal workers from Bulgaria on their labour and social rights in host countries. At national level, collective agreements by FNSZ structures bring transparency to hiring and dismissal procedures so that no undeclared practices can be applied.

excellent social dialogue in individual branch structures, the sector still lacks a sectoral agreement and thus cannot arrange an encompassing framework for the negotiating cycles within all sites and sub-branches (FNSZ 2020). Collective bargaining at sectoral level functioned up until 1998 with the Ministry of Agriculture and Food as the employer organisation which was party to the agreement. With the overall transformation of the sector and the restitution of private property, sectoral bargaining ceased.

Nowadays, sectoral bargaining is hindered by multiple challenges. First, there is no employer organisation(s) to represent all branch activities in the agriculture sector. There are also no rules to decide which sectoral employer organisation is representative, and thus existing organisations cannot form a single representative structure which will be a party to a sectoral agreement. Second, the low share of employees in the sector and the predominantly seasonal and undeclared work arrangements make for substantial difficulties for unions in organising workers and representing them.

FNSZ participates in all discussions<sup>2</sup> related to the drafting of the government budget and argues resolutely for proper spending to be made on public structures in the sector. Government spending has proved to be inadequate over the years and has led to widespread redundancies and low wage increases in agriculture. In this area, FNSZ has actively supported its member organisations in seeking to mitigate lay-off processes by signing collective agreements reviewing vacancy numbers and dismissal policies while allowing for the compensation of certain categories of dismissed workers (FNSZ 2020).

Once the state budget for public agricultural structures has been adopted, FNSZ keeps track of expenditure via participating in the sectoral council for tripartite cooperation organised by the Ministry of Agriculture and Food. This council includes FNSZ and three other union federations along with several employer organisations which are members of nationally representative employer structures.<sup>3</sup> The council appears to be highly politicised and renews its members and activities once a new minister has been elected subsequent to the electoral cycle. As a result, its activities have occasionally ceased over a lengthy period with certain efforts needing to be made by unions to restore its functioning. Covid-19 also negatively affected the schedule of council meetings alongside the introduction of virtual communication

- 2 For instance, FNSZ submits its positions on the state budget to multiple institutions like the ministry of agriculture and food, NSTS, the sectoral council for tripartite cooperation, the ministry of finance and the National Assembly (FNSZ 2020).
- 3 Trade union representative structures are FNSZ, the Federation of Trade Union Organisations from the Forestry and Wood Processing Industry within KNSB, the National Agriculture and Forestry Federation at KT 'Podkrepa' and the National Federation of Technical Industry, Science and Informatics at KT 'Podkrepa'. The employers are represented by the Association of Agricultural Producers in Bulgaria at the Confederation of Employers and Industrialists in Bulgaria; the National Union of Agricultural Cooperatives in Bulgaria at the Bulgarian Industrial Capital Association; the Bulgarian Association of Farmers; and the Bulgarian Association for the Circular Economy and Biotechnologies at the Bulgarian Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

channels which, however, did not prove as effective as in-person ones (FNSZ 2023). Other problems observed within the council include meetings that are too narrowly focused and little actual dialogue on the emerging labour and social security issues which affect the sector.

Apart from the tripartite council, social dialogue also takes place in the branch councils encompassing both public and private entities which offer some good examples of continuing annual negotiations leading to the signing of collective agreements (FNSZ 2020). In this way, FNSZ has achieved better wage rates and improved working conditions for its members across the country.

FNSZ has identified a framework of actions leading towards greater bargaining coverage and has argued persistently for legal amendments which recognise civil servants' right to collective bargaining.

The bargaining problem affecting civil servants in the state administration has been caused by gaps and imperfections in the regulatory framework. The presence of two categories of worker in the state administration (workers employed under the provisions of the labour code; and workers employed under the Civil Servant Act) requires negotiations to follow different legal provisions. The Civil Servant Act does not provide for collective bargaining for civil servants (FNSDUO 2017). Although there is no legally regulated right for civil servants to collective bargaining, FNSZ has managed to enforce the practice of agreements being concluded on behalf of civil servants. In this way, civil servants are granted the same rights as those employed under the labour code once a collective agreement has been concluded. Good practice here represents a sustainable union strategy for retaining and attracting trade union members in public enterprises.

### Empowering base-level structures as an innovative organising strategy: insights from an interview with the FNSZ chair

FNSZ's membership of over 5,000 members has stood stable since 2010 subsequent to the lengthy period of restructuring and resulting layoffs in the Bulgarian agricultural sector. The years after the Covid-19 pandemic proved successful ones as the union began to extend to many non-organised workplaces in the public sector despite the widespread belief among workers that they had no right to unionise.

FNSZ's innovative approach towards organising has been developed through its well-functioning committees representing women and young people. Along with these, a newly created programme developing cultural, sport and tourism activities for union members was created in 2024. These structures were recognised as a priority area for development by the newly elected chair of FNSZ, Valentina Vasilyonova, who was elected in 2022 during the regular FNSZ congress. She replaced the former leader with the unanimous support of delegates representing FNSZ company-level members. During her five-year mandate, she aims to strengthen basic company-level structures so that they not only sustain membership numbers but also become attractive for non-union members.

The sectoral committees and the programme provide members with a field of self-realisation in which they can interact and 'speak about topics of their interest

in the field of labour rights and other sector-related issues'. Empowering each union member to deal with topics of his/her own interest and to search for solutions across a range of (labour) topics turns both FNSZ structures and its company-level unions into units that are 'lively' and 'recognised' by workers in the sector. That way, bottom-up activities for membership growth can potentially appear in good time as members act as another organising actor (along with initiatives led by the FNSZ management team itself).

According to the chair's observations, this approach has had highly positive initial outcomes. Existing members 'feel excited and grateful for the attention they receive when in-person meetings are arranged' within the committees or under the programme funds. The exchange of 'first hand' experience during union-led events appears to be a good tool for motivating non-unionised employees to consider joining the union. At the same time, the FNSZ office gains recognition as a partner to its member structures, while ideas towards the achievement of the agenda items during its mandate are continually being generated and submitted to the chair. Such an overarching approach (a combination of top-down and bottom-up activities) for managing change in organizations is associated with the delivery of synergistic advantage and greater employee support (Ansari 2017).

### *Committees representing women and young people*

Over the last ten years, FNSZ has invested substantial effort into the development of its Youth Committee and its Women's Committee with the aim of establishing active and engaged union leaders that deal with union issues and who are proven as active participants in Bulgarian civil society. With the constantly expanding boundary of activities undertaken by the two committees, the FNSZ chair believes that:

... a strong team of future generation trade union leaders is being created who recognise social and civil dialogue as a tool for applying the union agenda and maintaining membership numbers.

In Vasilyonova's view, these committees are creating 'second echelon leaders', or well-educated union leaders capable of carrying out their duties in a sustainable way. Thus unions can also 'back their generational transitions' while staying attractive to younger workers. The current understanding of FNSZ is that these committees should be dealing with the problems identified by union members themselves, and that they should become 'proactive' and subsequently contribute to the FNSZ agenda and its future organising plans. Vasilyonova perceives the committees as 'supportive' structures to sector-level union policy, able to contribute to finding 'sector level solutions' to resolve company cases.

Since 2014, the Women's Committee has traced gender discrimination in terms of remuneration, pensions and workplace harassment and violence. Though these issues are dealt with by 'discrimination' clauses in collective labour agreements, Vasilyonova sees that a greater number of awareness raising initiatives are being undertaken by the Women's Committee which is hosting seminars, roundtables and conferences or otherwise participating in those organised by partner organisations.

The Committee also has started to support its female members by expanding the thematic scope of its events. It now gives the floor to showcasing and developing ‘talented women’, including the collection and publication of poems by women trade unionists, carried out with the support of FNSZ.

The Youth Committee has been functioning with the aim of ensuring the ‘succession of union structures’ and the engagement of young workers in union work. FNSZ holds an electronic register of its organisations and traces the statistics of their demographic profile. Today, the average age of members is over 48. In consequence, Vasilyonova expounds on the need to deploy a strategy of empowerment for each company-level union so that they can:

... support the entry and retaining of younger trade union members and promote its leaders in taking care of generational policies on site.

FNSZ has established ‘solid relationships’ with different youth-related initiatives. Thus Youth Committee members can benefit from personal development training (like the annual programme undertaken by the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung called ‘leaders of change’) and engage with other stakeholders to deal with issues of interest to young union members. For instance, Vasilyonova points out that the Youth Committee is now engaged with sustainable consumption practices and in giving support to the EU ‘Stop Glyphosate’ campaign in agriculture activities. To spread the word on these issues, FNSZ and its Youth Committee have organised many in-person meetings with business, school and university representatives across the country.

#### *‘Culture, sport, tourism’ programme*

In the view of Valentina Vasilyonova, this programme has been created to ‘revive trade unionism as a value’ and to ‘oppose attacks on collective actions’. FNSZ administrates the programme’s fund which is supported by the membership fees collected from all company-level basic organisations. The fund has written rules on the amounts that can be granted to each applicant. This provides for greater clarity in structural administration since one of the prerequisites for obtaining funding is the regular payment of membership fees to FNSZ. Company-level unions are stimulated to report their member numbers in full and to request back a part of the fees submitted.

FNSZ also requires some proof of the activity undertaken, which are checked to ensure the resources have been spent on the claimed purpose. All the activities funded in this way are promoted on the FNSZ website. The main objective is to enable union members to gather and communicate outside the workplace, whether this be cultural, sport or tourism based as long as it is of interest to union members. This allows members to cooperate on topics that are outside the union’s ordinary thematic scope. The initiatives supported through the programme facilitate the advertisement of membership as part of a ‘lively community’ in which the ultimate goal is to ‘unite team members’. The programme also highlights another aspect to joining unions and paying membership fees. FNSZ also envisages cooperating with other sectoral

structures within KNSB (which deal with cultural events, for instance) so as to be able to support as many applicants as possible.

Other empowering top-down practices being developed during the current mandate: further interview insights

Alongside these practices, FNSZ envisages enhancing membership activities and union engagement through top-down activities that can contribute to the growth in membership numbers. Vasilyonova identifies as such:

- a) constant contact with the media and partner organizations
- b) greater cooperation with KNSB regional councils
- c) wider use of online tools for establishing communication with company-based workers.

FNSZ is involved in many awareness raising campaigns about union activities and invests substantially in media coverage of its activities in resolving sector-specific problems. It also engages in various social media groups and spreads word of the advantages of joining the union and the accomplishments of unions over time. Furthermore, it invests time in developing partnerships with various organisations from outside government, relying on its network to reach non-unionised organisations in the sector. This level of cooperation allows it to be provided with support for its ongoing campaigns<sup>4</sup> and to upgrade the union agenda regarding new issues of interest to those working in agriculture. To cooperate successfully, FNSZ has established training programmes for its affiliates that are focused on the development of communications and interpersonal skills with different stakeholders: both state and private bodies as well as non-governmental organisations. Vasilyonova identifies that it is worth:

... reaching structures that are relevant to our cause and which would contribute to a positive change in attitudes towards the sector and which will contribute to making it attractive and understandable for citizens and society.

Teamwork and close cooperation with regional KNSB councils is proving to be another efficient method for sustaining members and reaching new ones. Vasilyonova is aware of the KNSB agenda item on improving social dialogue at all levels<sup>5</sup> by safeguarding the right to organise and promoting collective bargaining. FNSZ now

- 4 There are numerous campaigns that FNSZ has upheld and maintained over time, including: decent work and countering exploitation in the agricultural sector; equality and the empowerment of working women and young people in the sector; unfolding the potential of the sector for green and digital transformation and the circular economy; fair work and fair food; and banning glyphosate and pesticides in order to protect a clean environment – water, air, soil. Among FNSZ’s main partners are the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Bulgaria, the Center for Sustainable Communities Development and the Foundation for Organic Agriculture BIOSE-LENA.
- 5 According to the Bulgarian labour code, collective bargaining can take place at different levels and thus separate collective agreements can be concluded at company, sector and municipality level.

benefits from better support from the regional councils. Vasilyonova describes the councils as a key partner in resolving labour-related issues at enterprise level. The councils are allowed to attend FNSZ coordination meetings in order to get to know the union's way of functioning and the policies which it applies. She perceives that the councils are aware of local workers' problems and demands in the region and have already helped in creating new union structures by disseminating FNSZ policies and achievements in terms of workplace regulation. The councils are, therefore, valuable partners in organising as they initiate meetings with non-unionized workers and efficiently present FNSZ activities as bringing 'the long-sought solution to workers' problems'.

Transformation of unionising practices to the digital environment is a new way quickly to reach workers that are willing to join the union. Online meetings and the filling in of anonymous questionnaires allow FNSZ not only to gather information on existing problems but also to get to know which solution scenario receives most support. Having this type of information allows the union to establish efficient dialogue with workers and employer representatives. The ultimate goal is the establishment of a new trade union structure that contributes to a better workplace environment.

## Conclusions

Though organising in agriculture is restricted by sectoral patterns, unions are still active and seeking out innovative organising strategies. The analysis in this article focuses on a specific sectoral federation that has reported recent membership growth. FNSZ applies a holistic approach to organising that recognises both top- down and bottom-up activities. It uses its committees for women and young people and its newly adopted funding programme as an innovative empowerment tool for creating engaged union members. Moreover, it aims to facilitate the greater involvement of trade union leaders on sites as a prerequisite for future organising successes. The Federation's chair recognises each interaction between company- based shop stewards as a self-realising tactic that eventually builds confident leaders capable of articulating what an individual can gain by joining the union. Stimulating the building of strong intra-union ties between existing union structures and targeted non-unionised organisations can provide for the consolidation and sustainability of membership interest.

## Note on method and data

Both desk-based research data and an in-person interview have been used in the elaboration of this article. Several research contributions were analysed to obtain both quantitative and qualitative data for the sectoral context and its implications for organising. In order to examine the organising policies which are currently applied in the sector trade union structure in focus (FNSZ), an in-depth interview was conducted with its chair in August 2024. Following a semi-structured interview instrument, data was collected and then described within sections dealing with the empowerment of the union's base-level structures and the top-down organising strategies which have been implemented.

## References

- BNR (2024) ‘The so-called “counting” of the trade unions has began’, accessed 28 August 2024 at: <https://bnr.bg/post/102024782/zapochna-t-nar-prebroavane-na-sindikaitite> (in Bulgarian).
- Doucouliaagos, Hristos, Richard Freeman and Patrice Laroche (2017) *The economics of trade unions: a study of a research field and its findings* London: Routledge.
- FNSDUO (2017) ‘Collective bargaining in the state administration’, accessed 15 November 2024 at: <https://fnsduo.com/index.php/резолуции/57-резолуция-№6-колективно-трудова-договаряне-в-държавната-администрация> (in Bulgarian).
- FNSZ (2018) ‘Undeclared labour in agriculture. Problems, challenges, fixing approaches’, accessed 28 August 2024 at: <https://www.fnsz.org/pdf/2019/Analiz-Nedeklariran-trud-fin.pdf> (in Bulgarian).
- FNSZ (2020) ‘Agriculture sector. Social partnership and collective bargaining, history and opportunities’, accessed 28 August 2024 at: <https://www.fnsz.org/pdf/2020/Analiz-FNSZ-Social-Dialog-Fin.pdf> (in Bulgarian).
- FNSZ (2022) ‘Accounting report on the activity of FNSZ for the period 2017–2021’, accessed 15 November 2024 at: <https://fnsz.org/pdf/2022/kongres/otchetten-doklad-20kongres.pdf> (in Bulgarian).
- FNSZ (2023) ‘Good practices in social dialogue, collective bargaining and social policy in the agriculture sector and its service units’, accessed 28 August 2024 at: [https://www.fnsz.org/pdf/2023/Narachnik\\_KTD\\_2023\\_%D0%904.pdf](https://www.fnsz.org/pdf/2023/Narachnik_KTD_2023_%D0%904.pdf) (in Bulgarian).
- Heyden, Mariano, Sebastian Fourné, Bastiaan Koene, Renate Werkman and Shazad (Shaz) Ansari (2017) ‘Rethinking “top-down” and “bottom-up” roles of top and middle managers in organizational change: implications for employee support’ *Journal of Management Studies* 54(7): 961–985.
- Hristov, Chavdar (2016) ‘The latest changes in the Labour Code regarding the criteria for representativeness of workers’ and employers’ organizations’, accessed 28 August 2024 at: <https://trudipravo.bg/izbrani-statii/poslednite-promeni-v-kt-otno-sno-kriteriite-za-predstavitelnost-na-organizacziite-na-rabotnitsite-i-sluzhitelite-i-na-rabotodatelite/> (in Bulgarian)
- ImproCollBar Project (2023) ‘Desk research Bulgaria’, accessed 28 August 2024 at: [https://improcollbar.eu/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/desk-research\\_bulgaria.pdf](https://improcollbar.eu/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/desk-research_bulgaria.pdf).
- KNSB (2021) ‘The government recognised KNSB as a nationally representative organisation of workers and employees’, accessed 28 August 2024 at: <https://knsb-bg.org/index.php/2021/01/13/pravitelstvoto-prizna-knsb-za-nacionalno-predstavitelna-organizacziya-na-rabotniczite-i-sluzhitelite/> (in Bulgarian).

- KNSB (2022) ‘KNSB Programme 2022–2027’, accessed 28 August 2024 at: [https://www.9.knsb-bg.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/programa-knsb\\_print.pdf](https://www.9.knsb-bg.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/programa-knsb_print.pdf) (in Bulgarian).
- KNSB (2024a) ‘KNSB launched a project to map the skills of employees at the Contour Global – Maritsa East 3 thermal power plant’, accessed 28 August 2024 at: <https://knsb-bg.org/index.php/2024/03/29/knsb-zapochna-proekt-za-karto-grafirane-na-umeniyata-na-zaetite-v-tecz-kontur-global-maricza-iztok-3/> (in Bulgarian).
- KNSB (2024b) ‘Sectoral analysis of the agriculture sector in Bulgaria’, CITUB paper for project *Sustainable development through social partnership*.
- KT ‘Podkrepa’ (2024) ‘KT Podkrepa strongly opposes the proposed changes to the criteria for representativeness of workers and employers’, accessed 28 August 2024 at: <https://podkrepa.org/кт-подкрепа-застава-твърдо-против-на/> (in Bulgarian).
- Lex.bg (2024) ‘Labour Code’, accessed 15 November 2024 at: <https://lex.bg/laws/ldoc/1594373121> (in Bulgarian).
- Tali, Mohmad, Numan Wani and Afifa Ibrahim (2021) ‘The power of branding influencing consumer purchase decision: a comprehensive literature review’ *Elementary Education Online* 20(6): 5362–5387.



© Lyuboslav Kostov and Rositsa Makeleva

