

BARMETAL: Digitalization, Automatization and Decarbonization: Opportunity for strengthening collective bargaining in the metal sector (101052331) Country Factsheet - SWEDEN

D-A-D in Sweden

Sweden is a small and open economy highly dependent on its exporting industries, with many large manufacturing companies, and a rather large metal and automotive industry. The Swedish automotive industry is still within the core of the European automotive industry, despite structural changes and the demise of Saab and the takeover by Geely of Volvo Cars. However, many other types of vehicles than cars are produced for the world market.

The automotive share of total manufacturing in Sweden is 13,8% which is the third largest share in EU 2023.

Approximately 60 000 employees work directly in the sector in about 120 companies.

Sweden has strong political and social partner commitments to stay ahead and be competitive in all kinds of digitalization, automation, and decarbonization.

Even though general or sectoral collective agreements does not specifically regulate D-A-D issues, there is a strong social partner commitment to the issues and there are many aspects of the CAs that are of relevance.

Key challenges in the metal sector

- The main local difficulties with D-A-D-technologies are to facilitate a swift and smooth implementation. Training and retraining of current employees in the new technologies to not be replaced by technology.
- Competition between companies over recruiting new employees with adequate competence and skills.
- To keep up momentum in implementing D-A-D and fostering local industrial cultures of positive attitudes and support from some parts of the blue-collar collectives.

Role of social partners in addressing D-A-D

- High levels of collective agreement coverage, 95% of employees are covered by collective agreements, ensures that the industrial relations system is of high capacity to address D-A-D issues.
- Despite the high union coverage and CA, a great variety of local agreements and locally adapted solutions in mainly small enterprises that help customize D-A-D strategies exist.
- Social partners are in consensus of the importance to continue working strategically with D-A-D issues and means to take on challenges.

D-A-D in workplace

- Three company case studies based on interviews with management and TU representatives, as well as staff in organisations of various size.
- All three companies studied have strategies to digitalize and automate, but they have only partly have been negotiated with the unions and sometimes too late in the process.
- However, the unions agree on the issues at hand, whether they concern safety, change of work tasks or job rotation or competence building.

Bargaining efforts in companies

- Local trade union representatives have rather little influence on implementation. Still, representatives of the companies maintain that blue- and white-collar workers' interests are taken into consideration, and their views matter. In all companies, opportunities are secured through joint trade union-management consultation processes.
- Bottom-up improvements are suggested by employees. All in all, the DAD issues are very much framed in terms of staying competitive internationally.