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BARBARA SURDYKOWSKA

THE WASTE SECTOR IN POLAND

CHALLENGES OF ORGANISING AND COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

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Social Policy Programme

This report is one in a series presenting the findings of research carried out in Bulgaria, Czechia, Croatia, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia and Slovenia as part of the project CEE CAW 'Challenges for Organising and Collective Bargaining in Care, Administration and Waste collection sectors in Central and Eastern European Countries', which was led by the Institute of Public Affairs (Warsaw). The other partners were the: Bulgarian Academy of Sciences (Sofia), Central European Labour Studies Institute (Bratislava), Lithuanian Centre of Social Sciences (Vilnius), and Centre for Democracy Foundation (Belgrade).

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1. Methodological preface

The report is based on in-depth desk research, primarily using reports and data from industry websites. This is supplemented by findings from discussions with industry representatives in the form of short online workshops and interviews with trade union representatives representing MPO workers in Warsaw and Krakow, and a union leader representing workers in a multinational company operating in the waste sector. Interviews were also conducted with representatives of two companies (Polish capital) and representatives of the Chamber of Commerce. The interviews were conducted between May and August 2024.

2. General characteristics of the sector

In the EU-27, Poland ranks 4th in terms of the mass of waste generated in 2020, with a share of 7.5%. Poland has generally met the EU waste management targets set over the last decade, yet the latest targets set for 2025–35 require rapid implementation of adjustments.

The current Polish regulations on municipal waste management, which delegate these responsibilities to municipalities, provide for the self-financing of the system. However, Polish local government financial statements show that the system has remained chronically unbalanced across the country in recent years. In the years 2017–21, between 77% and 84% of local authorities reported an excess of expenditure over revenue for waste management.

Local authorities have long argued that increased revenue under producer responsibility would help them. However, the deposit system adopted in 2023 (to take effect from 2025) provides for the separation of some packaging waste from the municipal system. This means that municipalities and current system operators may lose some revenue from the sale of recyclables from this waste that will be included in the deposit system. This, in turn, may result in the need to raise revenue from other sources (for businesses — an increase in the price of services; for local authorities — given the legal restrictions on tariffs — coverage from other budget items, ultimately passed on to residents).

Infrastructure gaps are cited as one of the reasons for the relatively low recycling rates compared to the EU27. An insufficient number of selective waste collection points (PSZOK) and an insufficient capacity of sorting facilities for selectively collected waste or recycling of plastics and multi-materials are reported. In some other cases (particularly biological waste treatment facilities), insufficient capacity is currently a consequence of low levels of selective waste collection. Meanwhile, needs in all areas related to selective collection, recycling and recovery of municipal waste will increase significantly by 2035.

In 2021, in the annex added to the 'National Waste Management Plan 2022' (*Krajowy plan gospodarki odpadami*) the value of the expenditures necessary to adapt the infrastructure to the EU targets for municipal waste management was set at nearly PLN 23 billion, of which more than PLN 17 billion was related to investments necessary to be made by 2028.

There is an ongoing debate in Poland about whether the waste market should be taken out of the free market and given priority to municipal companies. For the time being, however, in-house operations are struggling to gain a foothold and there is no trend towards changing this situation.

The majority of waste is collected from residents by private companies. In 2021, they collected or arranged for the collection of 61.1% of municipal waste (61.2% in 2020). According to CSO data, in 2021 foreign-owned units collected 7.2% of municipal waste (7.3% in 2020), with foreign-owned enterprises most likely to collect waste in large cities.

Desk research shows a large number of debates and discussions concerning waste management in Poland, such as the rationality of building waste incineration plants, the principles of the deposit system related to packaging, and others are present in the public debate. However, little attention is paid to the sector's employees, working conditions, remuneration issues, or the shortage of workers in the labour market. It can be hypothesised that the problems of workers in this sector are not articulated explicitly.

'The National Waste Management Plan 2028' (*Krajowy plan gospodarki odpadami*) assumes that all targets set by EU directives will be met within the set deadlines. This task, in the context of the current, much-delayed state of implementation, is an ambitious challenge, requiring not only far-reaching system changes but also significant investment in infrastructure development. A prerequisite for achieving the goals is to improve the system of segregation, selective collection, and sorting of waste. At present, the system is burdened by: low public awareness; a too low and unevenly distributed number of municipal waste selective collection points (the number of PSZOKs in 2018–22 increased by 14%, but is still insufficient, and in 2020 about 300 municipalities, (more than 16%), had not established even one such point); insufficient capacity of sorting plants (largely due to inefficient manual processes) and waste treatment facilities in relation to the targets set; increasing operational costs of the entire system; and an imperfect financing system (the inability of many local government units to balance revenues and costs generated by waste management).

In 2019–21, the Polish waste industry has seen a marked improvement in its aggregate financial situation. In the group of entities with at least 10 employees, net profit increased by more than 2.5 times during this period. In 2021, the industry's return on equity was more than 23% vs. less than 10% on average in 2010–18, and the percentage of unprofitable companies fell from 22% to 11% over the same period.

The driving force behind the improved financial performance was strong revenue growth (up 55% in 2019–21), outpacing the growth in operating costs. This appears to have been driven by the industry's strong negotiating position in the context of the need to meet EU27 environmental targets, the growing role of separate collection and recycling, and limited competition and capacity shortages in key market segments.

In light of the recently adopted regulations, 2023–24 will be the last years before the introduction of a new deposit system for single-use packaging. From 2025 onwards, the organisation and financing of a collection and management system is to be entrusted to waste introducers (i.e. packaging producers) and operators selected by them. This is a very short period of time for the organisation of this system and adaptations, with operators in the current municipal system facing increased competition and potentially losing part of the revenue from the sale of attractive fractions (PET plastics, aluminium) on the secondary market.

According to data from Eurostat and the Polish Central Statistical Office (GUS), in the waste sector (PKD 38 — collection, processing and neutralisation of waste and recovery of raw materials), more than 4,800 entities were operating in Poland in 2020, employing nearly 75,000 people. Of these, 650 companies (and nearly 60,000 employees) are entities employing at least 10 people. Basic statistics show a strong fragmentation of the industry and its relatively high labour intensity (low share of large entities in revenues, disproportionately high number of companies and employees in relation to revenues compared to the EU-27).

The share of the industry in the main economic aggregates of the country (value added, total turnover and profits of enterprises, employment, investments) is rather low and does not exceed 1.5%. However, this does not detract from its role in the overall socio-economic system, especially in the context of the increasingly ambitious environmental and climate policies of the EU-27. Its smooth functioning is a necessity for the implementation of the circular economy and affects the competitiveness of other sectors in the face of growing ESG challenges.

The following list indicates the largest players operating in the Polish waste sector:

Alba https://www.alba.com.pl/

One of the foreign businesses operating in Poland is the Alba Group (brands Alba and Interseroh). In Poland, Alba collects waste in Chorzów, Dąbrowa Górnicza, Wałbrzych, Czeladź, Jelcz-Laskowice, Dobryszyce and Bierutów. The ALBA Group has been present in Poland since 1995.

ATF https://atfpolska.com/

ATF has been operating since 1997, previously under the name PHU Eko Fiuk. It is a family company, built solely on Polish capital, with over 150 employees. ATF collects waste in 20 locations in the West Pomeranian Voivodeship. These include Białogard, Kalisz Pomorski, Wałcz, Tuczno, Połczyn, Świdwin, Szczecinek, Stargard, Dygów, Drawno.

Byś https://www.bys.pl/

Byś is an entity based entirely on Polish capital that has been providing waste collection and management services to cities and private companies for 25 years. It serves Łomianki, Izabelin, Leszno, Zielonka and property owners located in the Bielany and Żoliborz districts of Warsaw.

Eneris https://eneris.pl/

The Eneris Group operates in more than 100 municipalities in Poland, where it collects 400,000 tonnes of waste per year from around one million inhabitants. Eneris serves Kielce, Piła, Wrocław, Rawa Mazowiecka, Tomaszów Mazowiecki, Jaworzno, Gorzów Wielkopolski, Bydgoszcz, Siemiatycze, among others. In 2015, the ENERIS Group bought the assets of Veolia Usługi dla Środowiska, creating ENERIS Surowce, one of the largest waste management companies in Poland.

FBSerwis https://www.fbserwis.pl/

FBSerwis is a company that is part of the Budimex Group. The FBSerwis Group includes subsidiaries operating in the field of waste management (collection, management and processing of waste, maintenance of cleanliness) and running municipal waste processing installations in the Dolnośląskie, Łódzkie, Małopolskie, and Mazowieckie voivodeships. FBSerwis collects waste in six counties. Among others, from the inhabitants of the town of Oława within the Ślęza-Oława Intercommunal Association, in Lądek-Zdrój, Kłodzko, in seven small communes in the Małopolskie Voivodeship, in Zduńska Wola, Rogów, Tuszyn, in the Kluczbork commune, in Przemyśl, Rzeszów and another seven smaller communes, as well as in parts of the city of Poznań and communes in the Wielkopolska region, including the commune of Gniezno.

FCC Environment https://www.fcc-group.eu/polska/home

FCC Environment CEE (formerly A.S.A. Group) was established in 1988. Since mid-2001, FCC has been providing its services to residents and institutional customers in the Silesian, Malopolska and Podkarpackie voivodeships. It serves 49 municipalities, nearly 700,000 residents, and approximately 9,000 commercial and industrial customers. It employs 580 people and has 142 specialist and transport vehicles. Cities where it collects waste include Zabrze, Lubliniec, Zduńska Wola, Kraków, Jabłonka, Radomsko, Nowy Targ.

Lekaro https://lekaro.pl/

Lekaro is a Polish family company that has been providing urban cleaning services for 25 years. It has been operating in the Otwock district since the company was established, including a specialised waste treatment plant on industrial land in Wola Ducka for over 10 years. It employs around 400 people. Within the capital agglomeration, Lekaro's collection services cover the municipalities of: Józefów, Michałowice, Marki, Konstancin Jeziorna, Piaseczno, Otwock and Wiązowna. It also serves selected districts of Warsaw (Praga Północ, Praga Południe, Rembertów, Wawer and Wesoła).

MPO Krakow https://mpo.krakow.pl/

The largest players in the waste market include MPO Kraków and MPO Warsaw. MPO Krakow will collect municipal waste in the Municipality of Krakow from 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2025 as the leader of the consortium of PreZero Małopolska, Remondis Krakow, and FCC Polska.

MPO Warsaw https://www.mpo.com.pl/

Currently, the municipal company from the capital handles a total of over 23,000 municipal waste collection points and empties over 62,000 containers and bins. MPO currently collects waste from 8 Warsaw districts — Śródmieście, Wola, Bemowo, Ursus, Włochy and Ochota, and, more recently, Praga Północ and Praga Południe, as well as another area called Sulejówek.

PreZero https://prezero.pl/

PreZero is a subsidiary of GreenCycle and thus part of the German Schwarz Group. In mid-2021, PreZero successfully completed the acquisition of the Suez waste and recycling facilities in the Netherlands, Luxembourg, Germany and Poland. The group operates in 11 countries with full supply chain waste management facilities. In Poland, PreZero represents more than one million tonnes of municipal waste collected annually at 46 locations and has 1,030 vehicles. It collects waste in 13 provinces, most of which are in Silesia and Mazovia. It serves, among others, Lublin, Łódź, Otwock, Kutno, Koło, Częstochowa, Kościerzyna, Żory, Knurów, Nowa Sól, Nowy Sącz, Bielsko-Biała and Kraków (in a consortium of companies).

Remondis https://www.remondis-polska.pl/

Remondis Polska is part of the Remondis Group, which presents itself as the world's largest recycling and water management company, with operations in more than 30 countries in Europe, Africa, Asia and Australia. It has been operating in Poland since 1992. Its 47 branches serve more than 200 cities and counties in the country. Remondis collects waste in many large cities — including Warsaw, Łódź, Dąbrowa Górnicza, Ruda Śląska, Gdynia, Płock, Bydgoszcz, Opole, Olsztyn, Szczecin, Świnoujście, Tarnowskie Góry, Poznań, Psary, Kraków (as part of a consortium).

Veolia Polska https://www.veolia.pl/odpady-komunalne

It offers the solution of providing a thermal conversion service for pre-Refuse Derived Fuel fractions and heat production to the district heating system.

3. Major problems and challenges in the sector

In the second half of the past decade, trends in Poland's municipal waste management were evident, in line with the direction of EU policy. In 2014–21, the total weight of processed landfill waste decreased by 19 percentage points (p.p.), while the share of waste recycled, composted or digested increased by 14 p.p. The share of thermally treated waste also increased.

However, it should be noted that compared to other EU-27 countries, Poland is still one of the countries with a high share of storage (in 2021 39% vs. 23% on average in the EU-27; a number of Western European countries — excluding the Mediterranean countries — have already practically eliminated this method of municipal waste management) and a relatively low share of waste prepared for recycling and composted (around 40% vs. around 50% on average in the EU-27).

It is perhaps worrying (in the context of increasingly ambitious EU targets) that the rate of change in the structure of municipal waste management in Poland has slowed significantly in recent years with the greatest progress being made before 2018.

The available financial data shows a strong disparity between the financial situation of private and public entities. The latter also shows much weaker investment activity.

The big difference between the performance and financial indicators of private entities and those owned by the public sector is telling. Of course, for the latter, the main purpose of the business is not profit but the provision of public benefit services. However, the approximately twice as high percentage of unprofitable companies compared to the private sector and the more than half lower aggregate profitability ratios shown in the last three years are indicative of efficiency and financing problems in this group of entities. This is a burden on the waste sector as a whole and cannot but affect its effectiveness

Even more striking is the divergence between the public and private sectors in terms of investment activity. For instance, in 2022, 70% of private companies were undertaking investments, while only 30% of those publicly owned were undertaking similar investments. The low investment activity of the public sector (which accounts for nearly 40% of the industry's entities and more than 40% of its employees), is worrying in the context of the challenges facing the Polish waste industry.

Poland is well behind in the implementation of the 2018–2019 package of EU regulations. It was not until 2023 that Poland successfully adopted a law transposing the Single-Use Plastics Directive. Additionally, in September 2023, a law came into force introducing a deposit system in Poland for beverage packaging (single-use plastic bottles, metal cans, reusable glass bottles), managed by those introducing the packaging. This new system in Poland is to be implemented as early as 2025.

4. Characteristics of social dialogue organisations in the sector

4.1. Challenges of organising employees

The Federation of Trade Unions of Municipal and Area Workers in Poland (*Federacja Związków Zawodowych Pracowników Gospodarki Komunalnej i Terenowej w Polsce*) operates within the Ogólnopolskie Porozumienie Związków Zawodowych (OPZZ).

https://www.opzz.org.pl/opzz/struktura/ogolnokrajowe-organizacje-czlonkowskie/branza-iv-uslugi-publiczne-organizacje-czlonkowskie/federacja-zwiazkow-zawodowych-pracownikow-gospodarki-komunalnej-i-terenowej-w-polsce

Naturally, this federation represents a broader spectrum of workers — they are not just workers in the waste sector.

In the assessment of the organisation itself, the representatives of the *Federacja Związków Zawodowych Pracowników Gospodarki Komunalnej i Terenowej* (FZZPGKiT) point out that in most of the union organisations, the number of members is decreasing and newly employed workers, do not show interest in union activities. Those workers do not see the benefits of union work and the possibility of using the Federations' centres on preferential terms is no incentive for them. In the organisation's opinion, unionisation has been on a downward trend from year to year, as employers are reducing employment to a minimum in workplaces for cost-saving reasons, and the specific nature of the work of some workplaces does not encourage young people to take up employment there, and thus there is a lack of opportunities to attract new members to union organisations. The organisation indicates that consideration should be given to increasing the membership fee to a minimum of PLN 4 per person per month. The current level of dues in many organisations is very low, even below PLN 1 per person per month, but their transfer to the federation is very irregular (https://komunalni.pl/2024/08/).

Within the trade union, NSZZ Solidarność, it is possible to point to structures in the form of the Secretariat of Public Services (*Sekretariat Służb Publicznych*) and the National Section of Public Utilities and Housing (*Krajowa Sekcja Gospodarki Komunalnej i Mieszkaniowej*a), and the National Section of Water and Sewerage Workers (*Krajowa Sekcja Pracowników Wodociągów i Kanalizacji*) operating within the latter. Both of these structures, in isolated cases, bring together organisations representing workers in the waste sector (where a company/inter-company trade union organisation represents water, sewerage and waste collection/processing workers). In other words, there is no *de facto*, claimed active trade unionised cross-company structure representing workers in the waste sector.

It seems that it can be argued that organising workers in the waste sector is not high on the list of organising priorities for any of the Polish trade union centres.

At this point, there seems a need for a study answering the question of whether Polish trade unions have, in general, embarked on activities in the field of organising so-called 'green' jobs, the creation of which is linked to policies of decarbonisation or building a circular economy. A question that could be posed is whether increased efforts to organise these workers have emerged to counteract the loss of membership due to the elimination of so-called 'brown' jobs.

4.2. Good practices for organising employees

Both the desk research and the interviews carried out did not identify good practices in the area of organising workers that are specific to the sector.

4.3. Characteristics of employer representation

Among the organisations representing waste management companies, the following should be mentioned:

Polish Chamber of Waste Management *(Polska Izba Gospodarki Odpadami)*
https://pigo.org.pl/o-pigo-2/

The Polish Chamber of Waste Management (PIGO) was established in 2003. It is an economic self-government organisation bringing together entrepreneurs involved in waste collection and management, municipal hygiene, recovery organisations, manufacturers and suppliers of technology, vehicles and equipment, consulting, and training companies. The statutory objectives of the chamber are to represent and protect the interests of its member entrepreneurs, to act for the development of entrepreneurship in waste management, and to protect and promote fair market competition and high, pro-ecological standards of selective collection, recycling and environmentally safe disposal of waste. PIGO is a member of the European Federation of Waste Management (FEAD), the European Compost Network (ECN) and the Association of Entrepreneurs and Employers. The information obtained (and an analysis of the organisation's website) does not indicate any social dialogue activities or cooperation with trade unions.

Association of "Polish Recycling" (*Stowarzyszenie "Polski Recykling"*)
https://polskirecykling.org/

This association was founded in 2015 and brings together companies involved in waste recycling. The main objective of the association is to be the voice of the recycling industry by representing common problems and the interests of the industry before state administration bodies, governmental and non-governmental institutions and organisations. The information obtained (and the analysis of the organisation's website) does not indicate any activities within the framework of social dialogue or cooperation with trade union organisations.

National Chamber of Waste Management (*Krajowa Izba Gospodarki Odpadami)* http://www.kigo.pl/

The National Chamber of Waste Management is an economic self-government organisation. The chamber is open, and entities related to waste management, mainly those operating in the structure of local self-governments, may join it on the terms set out in its statutes.

It brings together 130 national companies operating in the waste sector. The overarching goal of the chamber's activities is to create a legal framework that will enable Poland to achieve environmental performance at a European level. To realise these aspirations, the chamber cooperates with similar organisations from Germany, Austria, and Sweden and is a full member of Municipal Waste Europe. The information obtained (and the analysis of the organisation's website) does not indicate any activities within the framework of social dialogue or cooperation with trade union organisations.

Council of Regional Municipal Waste Treatment Facilities — Employers' Union, with 82 members (*Rada Regionalnych Instalacji Przetwarzania Odpadów Komunalnych — Związek Pracodawców)* https://radaripok.eu/o-nas/czlonkostwo/czlonkowie-rady-ripok.html

Originally, the council cooperated closely with the National Chamber of Commerce (*Krajowa Izba Gospodarcza, KIG*), functioning as a subcommittee of the Environmental Protection Committee of KIG. Since January 2019, the *Rada Regionalnych Instalacji Przetwarzania Odpadów Komunalnych* (RIPOK) Council has obtained legal personality as an employers' association. The information obtained (and an analysis of the organisation's website) does not indicate any social dialogue or cooperation activities with trade unions.

Waste Management Employers' Association (*Związek Pracodawców Gospodarki Odpadami*) (ceased operating in 2022 and evolved into the Polish Chamber of Waste Management).

Attention should be drawn to this association because the entity was the initiator of the creation of the Coalition for the Safety of Utility Workers (*Koalicja na rzecz bezpieczeństwa pracowników służb komunalnych*). The coalition was established in March 2019 on the initiative of the Waste Management Employers' Association and ENERIS Surowce. Its action is intended as a response to the low awareness of the issue of both risks and counteraction by virtually all stakeholders: residents, the media and, ultimately, some of the companies in the industry. The coalition's goals are to increase the safety of municipal employees and to support companies and organisations without independent health and safety resources in the field of health and safety (https://eneris.pl/eneris/zrownowazony-rozwoj/koalicja-bhp).

5. Collective bargaining and other forms of social dialogue in the sector – characteristics

The staffing gap, according to experts, is mainly caused by the reluctance of potential employees to take on low-skilled positions and high staff turnover, which, as indicated earlier, may be due to, among other things, the low wages offered and the negative image of the waste sector.

The panel of experts also identified positions where partial or full automation will take place. Among the positions that will be fully automated, sorters and waste loaders were mentioned most frequently. According to the experts, these are unskilled positions that, with the right investment, can quite easily be replaced by machine work. This process can be seen in an increasing number of companies. Therefore, the problem of staff gaps in these positions can be minimised in the not-so-distant future.

Foreigners are employed in 17% of companies in the sector — primarily, 25% of those, in the waste treatment and disposal sub-sector. It is also worth noting that foreigners are more often employed in medium and large companies, where the demand for employees is higher, with 33% of medium and large companies employing at least one foreigner.

Foreigners employed in the industry are most often in non-specialist positions. One in two employers hiring foreigners is for a sorting position and 40% for a loader position. It is much less common for employers to hire foreigners for managerial or specialist positions. Employers employing foreigners most often declare that their share among employees does not exceed 5%. In the case of all companies in Poland, 27% employ foreigners and account for between 5% and 10% of employees. As can be seen, a large proportion of establishments still do not employ foreigners at all.

Employers indicating the necessity of supplementing employees' skills declared that their employees mainly lack: social competencies, i.e. creativity, also understood as resourcefulness, involvement in work, independence at work, and reliability. It is worth pointing out that waste collection companies are more likely than those in other sub-sectors to expect their employees to develop analytical thinking skills, interdisciplinarity and flexibility for new tasks.

The declarations of the surveyed employees show that most of them (59%) had developed their professional competencies in at least one form in the 12 months preceding the survey. Those most frequently developing their competencies are plant managers, technologists and environmental specialists. For these positions, along with maintenance and logistics, the highest number of competencies that will increase in importance in the future was identified at the same time. However, those in non-specialist positions — warehousemen, waste loaders or sorters — improved their competencies less frequently in the last 12 months.

5.1. Content analysis of collective agreements

Collective agreements are concluded exclusively at the company level. Unfortunately, they largely duplicate provisions stemming from the Labour Code. Of the issues that are often present (and which go beyond the norms of the Labour Code), one can point to procedures and deadlines for negotiating salary increases, as well as agreements that include elements of remuneration, such as seniority bonuses or specific allowances related to working conditions (e.g. allowances related to the collection of heavier waste).

5.2. Other forms of social dialogue

There is no formalised bipartite or tripartite social dialogue in the waste sector in Poland. When looking for any form of dialogue, one can point to the functioning of the Sectoral Competence Council of the Raw Materials Recovery Sector.

The Sectoral Competence Council for the Materials Recovery Sector was established at the initiative of the National Chamber of Commerce and the Institute of Environmental Protection — National Research Institute. The council's activities aim to identify and forecast qualification and professional needs related to the development of the waste sector and to adapt the offer of formal and non-formal education to the needs of employers in the sector. According to information on the operation of the council, two representatives of the trade union movement take part in its meetings.

5.3. Impact of European sectoral social dialogue

Desk research, as well as the conducted interviews, did not identify any impact of social dialogue at an EU level on processes and phenomena taking place in this area in Poland. This is due both to the very insignificant activities carried out in the framework of social dialogue at an EU level and the lack of organisation and action beyond the workplace of workers in trade.

6. Conclusions and recommendations

The analysis of the sector's situation, combined with the opinions obtained from the social partners, shows the fundamental challenges facing Poland's waste management. Poland is among the 10 EU-27 countries at risk of failing to meet the recycling targets for plastic and municipal packaging waste set for 2025, as well as the municipal waste landfill rate set for 2035.

Among the challenges facing Poland, one can point to the low bio-waste capture rate and limited treatment capacity, as well as the potential to improve door-to-door waste collection. Recommendations include improving the efficiency of separate collection of packaging (including the implementation of a mandatory deposit system), supporting product reuse, generalising separate collection of bio-waste, implementing a Pay-as-you-Throw system for households, and introducing extended producer responsibility for packaging waste.

As pointed out in the publication '*Wyzwania kompetencyjne dla sektora gospodarki odpadami*', an important challenge for the sector is to enter into dialogue with the labour market and educational institutions. Defining and structuring within the framework of full qualifications, at vocational and higher educational levels, the learning outcomes needed by the sector in both the short and long term seem to be one of the most urgent. The second, equally important, is the right way of communicating with potential employees, showing the different tasks and professional roles possible in the sector, the different career paths, the automation of many processes and the implementation, of new, 'cleaner' technologies. This area requires appropriate human capital management based on competencies, as well as marketing communication skills.

The analysis of the area of social dialogue in the sector has shown its far-reaching dysfunctionality and, in practice, unnoticeable effects. Therefore, a basic recommendation is that the trade union movement should take more intensified action to organise workers and, above all, promote the organisational development of cross-company structures articulating the problems and challenges of employment across the sector and capable of undertaking sectoral dialogue.

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Barbara Surdykowska is a legal expert for the National Commission of NSZZ "Solidarność". She has many years of experience teaching labour law at the Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw. Since 2005, she has participated as an expert in numerous national and international projects addressing the evolving nature of work, including digitalisation, the platform economy, green transformation, and sustainable development. Furthermore, she has contributed to the development of transnational labour relations, particularly in the context of European Works Councils, the posting of workers, the Mobility Package, and the exchange of best practices in the implementation of European framework agreements. She is a member of the Goodcorp and MONACO research networks at the European Trade Union Institute, which focus on corporate governance issues and the implementation of corporate governance directives in the EU.