

## **Social Dialogue in Defence of Vulnerable Groups during the Pandemic: Comparative Analysis in Italy and Spain during COVID-19**

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This research paper examines the legal and collective bargaining framework for vulnerable groups in the labor markets of Italy and Spain during the COVID-19 pandemic. It aims to identify and understand specific vulnerable groups affected by the pandemic's consequences in both countries, along with their characteristics within and outside the labor markets. The paper explores public policies and social dialogue measures, emphasizing the role of social dialogue in implementation. The study uses a mixed-method approach, integrating qualitative and quantitative methods, including 20 in-depth interviews. Key findings reveal similar vulnerable group categories but differences in the role of social partners. Italy's social dialogue primarily involved trade unions and employers' organizations in consultation, with a dominant government role. In contrast, Spain utilized tripartite dialogue, involving trade unions, employers' organizations, and the government, resulting in collaborative efforts and 14 tripartite agreements during the pandemic. While offering insights into Italy and Spain's governance framework for vulnerable groups during the pandemic, this research's findings may not universally apply due to unique contexts. Additionally, the study may not capture longer-term policy effects. Nonetheless, its comparative approach and diverse research methods enrich its depth and comprehensiveness, emphasizing its objective of extracting practical lessons for crisis management through enhanced social dialogue.