

INVESTOR BRIEF

ArcelorMittal: Respect your workers – your most important asset

ArcelorMittal

April 2026

- ^ Main gate
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 **industriAll**
EUROPEAN TRADE UNION


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Introduction

ArcelorMittal S.A., the second largest steel-producing company in the world,¹ should be at the heart of a just transition to a cleaner, regenerative economy, leading the way on both social and environmental issues. It could lead its industry not just in profitability but in responsible production. Instead, the company extracts short-term value from its assets – including its workforce – and then moves on. Although its financials look good on the surface, this is not an accurate picture of its real state.

ArcelorMittal provides an array of reports, policies and other documents on its website; it touts itself as a leader in the steel industry, insists it is “respecting its commitment to social dialogue”² and claims safety is its top priority. But its public profile sits in uncomfortable contrast with the lived reality of its employees and contract workers. In fact, for those who want to invest in a responsible company working towards a sustainable future, there are significant red flags:

- lack of social dialogue and weak engagement of trade unions
- an inconsistent approach to occupational safety and health (OSH)
- massive job losses and offshoring
- financialization at the expense of investment in an aging physical plant
- a retreat from professed decarbonization goals

These issues, and the disjuncture between how the company presents itself and the actual situation at its assets, bring risks: **risks to the lives and safety** of ArcelorMittal workers; **legal, reputational and operational risks** to the company; and **risks to shareholders** that their company is not all it claims to be.

This document outlines these problems, providing a perspective investors will not find in the company's public materials. It cites worker testimony from multiple countries where ArcelorMittal has operations, as well as other sources that call the company's claims into question. What emerges are not isolated problems but common threads and a pattern of poor practice across the Group's operations. The brief aims to bolster investor engagement, with the goal of improving the company's behaviour. To that end, the final section suggests questions and key issues for investors to raise with ArcelorMittal.



Implications for investors:

ArcelorMittal cannot be the world-class steel company it claims to be without respecting its workers' rights. And short-term gains at the expense of long-term stability and sustainability will ultimately harm not only its workforce but also its shareholders and the company itself.



Social dialogue, trade union engagement and workers' rights

Social dialogue is not only fundamental to decent and safe work, which is a human right³; it is essential, as the [ILO notes](#), to good governance and social peace. It is at the heart of robust industrial relations, which allow a company to function smoothly and benefit from the knowledge and experience of its workforce.

ArcelorMittal's [employee relations policy](#) commits it to viewing employee representatives “as constructive role players” and holding “regular interaction and consultations” with them. Yet the company has a poor record on social dialogue, union engagement and supporting workers' fundamental rights at many of its assets.

For example:

- The company has repeatedly sidelined its European Works Council (EWC), a legal entity representing workers across its European operations. The EWC has sought information about plans for restructuring and massive

¹ At the time of writing, Baowu is the largest by [production](#), but ArcelorMittal is the largest by [market capitalization](#).

² ArcelorMittal, Annual Report 2025, p. 131.

³ See ILO Conventions 155 and 187, now incorporated in the ILO Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, and Art. 7, International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

offshoring of jobs and certain functions to India (detailed below) to be able to ensure equitable transfers and support for workers. The company, however, has failed to keep the EWC informed, making unilateral decisions despite the implications for workers across the Group. This violates both [EU law](#), which requires mandatory information and consultation, and ArcelorMittal's own EWC agreement. The lack of meaningful social dialogue with the EWC became so pronounced that in March the EWC was forced to demand mediation. European trade unions describe ArcelorMittal's approach as "gaslighting", in which the company claims to be informing the EWC while not doing so at all, leaving worker representatives feeling destabilized and disempowered by the interaction.

- In Liberia, ArcelorMittal has not been supportive of extending fundamental rights to workers at its security contractor, SEGAL, though those workers provide security for ArcelorMittal's assets and they joined IndustriALL affiliate United Workers Union of Liberia (UWUL) in April 2025. SEGAL workers have had longstanding complaints against SEGAL, including low wages, long hours and lack of social protection. Weeks after the workers joined UWUL, SEGAL fired 12 security guards and refused to reinstate them, despite being ordered to do so by the Ministry of Labour. When SEGAL workers protested peacefully in October 2025, 16 of them were [beaten and arrested](#) on SEGAL's orders and they now face a court case due to a complaint by the security company.

UWUL points out that ArcelorMittal Liberia, as the owner of the concession, and as the company using SEGAL's services, has the ability and responsibility to demand the security firm respect workers' rights and uphold Labour Ministry rulings. Yet it is not doing so. Nor has ArcelorMittal backed extending UWUL's collective agreement to the SEGAL workers, despite legal [recognition](#) in 2025 that those workers had the right to form a union and that UWUL was the [sole bargaining agent](#) for them. In failing to hold its contractors to the same human rights standards that the Group claims to uphold, ArcelorMittal could be considered complicit in violations of contract workers' rights.

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You allow someone in your house to violate laws and you don't take action; you are complicit in that.

United Workers Union of Liberia

- In March 2026, members of the United Steelworkers (USW), an IndustriALL affiliate, ended a [69-day strike](#) in Shelby, Ohio, USA. The union won increases in wages and retirement benefits, stronger language on working hours and the preservation of healthcare benefits. But as USW has pointed out, the strike was not about wages but about quality of life. And although the workers finally obtained a robust agreement, the fact that they had to resort to the longest strike in Local 3057's history is another example of the company's deeply flawed approach to social dialogue.



Implications for investors:

Words that do not match deeds should raise a red flag. ArcelorMittal publicly insists it respects employees and workers but fails to consistently uphold substantive social dialogue and workers' fundamental rights. This behaviour not only undermines the company's credibility, it raises legal and operational risks in various jurisdictions. Social dialogue and meaningful engagement of trade unions are fundamental to respect for workers' rights and workers' having a voice in decisions that affect them profoundly. Failure in this area blocks progress in other areas, such as health and safety and decent work, to which the next section turns.



Health and safety, wages and working conditions

Research from multiple sources (for example, [here](#), [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#)) points out that unionized workplaces are safer than their non-unionized counterparts, underscoring the central role of workers themselves in creating and maintaining a safe working environment. ArcelorMittal claims on its [website](#) that “working closely with our unions and our contractors is also key to achieving a safe and healthy workplace”, though its [Safety web page](#) does not mention trade unions or freedom of association, nor does the [health and safety policy](#) (from 2020) available on its website.

In fact, ArcelorMittal fails to meaningfully involve trade unions in OSH matters, and its [assertion](#) that employee safety is central to its values cannot be reconciled with its disregard for social dialogue and meaningful engagement of trade unions, as outlined in the previous section. Between 2013 and 2023 there were [over 300](#) worker deaths at ArcelorMittal operations globally. Even in a very dangerous industry, this is an appalling record and especially shocking for a global multinational that portrays itself as a responsible and cutting-edge company.

A fire in October 2023 at ArcelorMittal's Kostenko coal mine in Kazakhstan killed 46 workers and was widely reported to be the country's worst accident since it became independent from the Soviet Union. In December 2023, just as the company was [forced](#) by the government to leave, SteelWatch [reported](#) ArcelorMittal faced “demands to compensate victims and their families for nearly 30 years of deaths and injuries at its mines in Kazakhstan”, and noted that its operations had led to “18 significant accidents since 1995, resulting in over 180 fatalities and numerous severe injuries”. As the company departed, SteelWatch pointed to a “clear danger that it has cut and run” without fairly compensating workers or their families; SteelWatch [later accused](#) ArcelorMittal of leaving Kazakhstan with billions of dollars in health damages.

In 2008, several trade unions and ArcelorMittal management signed an [agreement](#) to form a Joint Global Health and Safety Committee. However, trade union involvement in OSH review processes remains extremely limited. In IndustriALL affiliates' experience, ArcelorMittal relies far more on audit and consultancy firms than on listening to workers and unions. The approach is largely compliance-driven rather than participatory and prevention-based. And despite the existence of the global agreement on a joint OSH committee, management has devoted insufficient resources and engagement to the process, failing to provide trade unions with incident reports or monitoring data.



In Mexico, the company's prolonged lack of preventive maintenance and investment in machinery led last year to an employee death, a serious injury and months of suspended operations. For years, ArcelorMittal had simply patched boiler leaks instead of addressing underlying problems with the equipment. This came to a head in June 2025 when a boiler explosion at the company's power plant in Lázaro Cárdenas resulted in the death of a supervisor and severe injuries to a worker. The company was finally forced to halt production and perform a maintenance overhaul. Even then, the company wanted to repair only the area that sustained damage. IndustriALL affiliate SNTMMSSRM argued that this would be only a patch and would not address other parts of the plant that needed fundamental repairs. The company eventually agreed to a full overhaul, which meant suspending production for over six months.

Production resumed only in February 2026. While the plant is now somewhat safer, further investment is still needed, and it took a supervisor's death, a worker's injury and significant operational losses for the company to respond to the urgent need for comprehensive repairs. The incident is a dramatic example of underinvestment leading not only to a major production stoppage but also to serious breaches of safety standards.

The Mexico incident, which could have been even more catastrophic in human and financial terms, indicates the company did not learn its lesson from the Kostenko tragedy. Two damning accounts published only weeks before the Kostenko fire ([here](#) and [here](#)) pointed to the company's insufficient investment in infrastructure in Kazakhstan. One [investor report](#) by Oddo/ABN Amro called the Kostenko fire “unfortunately not surprising” given the record of fatalities at the company's mines in the country. While the report noted the inherent dangers of coal mining, it also asserted ArcelorMittal's mines in Kazakhstan were “probably dilapidated and the group has doubtless not invested enough”. Further, it pointed to significant damage to ArcelorMittal's reputation from the disaster.

In Brazil, IndustriALL affiliate CNM-CUT trade union reports multiple problems at the company's operations, including a deterioration in labour relations and working conditions, increasingly strained collective bargaining processes, stagnating wages, elimination of benefits, and the deterioration of equipment and maintenance increasing the likelihood of accidents. At the João Monlevade plant, the company has disregarded workers' bargaining demands for better rest conditions and work-life balance, unilaterally imposing more exhausting work arrangements instead. The Tubarão facility reports excessive working hours and suppression of rest breaks. The Timóteo plant at Aperam (a company in which the Mittal family has a controlling interest) has long implemented a fixed shift model that has led to work overload, intensified work pace and increased overtime. Workers at the unit report a workplace culture based on fear.

Several plants have not implemented real wage increases for over 15 years, and deteriorating equipment and lack of preventive maintenance are widely reported across different facilities, raising OSH risks for workers. Over the past year, 22 workplace accident reports were registered with the local union, in addition to numerous reports of near misses with high potential severity, including crane failures, molten steel spills, ruptured pressurized pipes, and falling heavy loads. CNM-CUT notes that the company's own statements make clear its priority is financial impact and not decent working conditions or addressing OSH risks. The company's behaviour in Brazil is not an isolated example but echoes its practices in other parts of the globe.

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All these elements reveal a pattern of conduct that goes beyond specific plants. It is a management model that reduces workers' participation while increasing operational and financial demands.

CNM-CUT

In Liberia, ArcelorMittal has not been transparent or forthcoming about pay disparities between its own workers and those of its contractors who perform the same work. For example, UWUL reports ArcelorMittal Liberia's own security guards earn up to five times more than SEGAL guards doing the same job for the company, which is discriminatory to contract workers.

Transparency

It is not only workers who are ill-served when companies withhold key information. Transparency is also essential for investors, who rely heavily on corporate disclosures to make investment and stewardship decisions. Selective corporate reporting can mean material information is withheld or even distorted, posing risks to shareholders. ArcelorMittal's sustainability reporting raises red flags in this sense. For example, SteelWatch [notes](#) the company does not include the joint venture in India, ArcelorMittal Nippon Steel (AM/NS), in its group-wide climate targets, despite the operation being a core asset and responsible for a high percentage of the Group's global emissions. In a related vein, [Opportunity Green](#) reports the company does not include emissions of any of its joint ventures in its 2030 climate targets. The company's 2024 Plan de Vigilance, published in June 2025 under the French Duty of Vigilance law, does not even cover all of its French assets, much less its global supply chain (as required by the law).

The legal risk of this kind of narrow disclosure is becoming evident: in March 2026 a French court [ruled](#) cosmetics firm Yves Rocher had excluded its Turkish subsidiary from its vigilance plan and failed, as a parent company, to prevent union-busting at the subsidiary. It was the first time a French multinational was found liable for abuses overseas under the Duty of Vigilance law. Companies subject to this law, like ArcelorMittal, must take notice, and investors will increasingly be on guard against this type of due diligence and reporting failure by their portfolio companies.



Implications for investors:

ArcelorMittal's poor performance on health and safety, wages and working conditions is not only a human rights problem; it carries reputational, legal and operational risks, as well as representing a lost opportunity for improving operations, given trade unions' central role in ensuring safe workplaces. It is also a symptom of a deeper problem at a company that seems intent on capturing short-term gains at the expense of investing in its assets, whether those are workers, its physical plant or its long-term competitiveness as a global steel company, as the next section outlines.

Restructuring and failed progress on decarbonization

While the European steel industry is undergoing a generalized crisis due to high energy prices, Chinese overcapacity, US tariffs and low demand, among other factors, ArcelorMittal – unlike many of its peers – is in good financial shape. Consulting firm Syndex reports the company's sales performed steadily in 2022-25 despite lower steel prices; its EBITDA, with its European operations a major contributor, indicates satisfactory financial health; and its debt ratio is low (8.5% of net debt over total assets at the time of writing).

Despite these robust indicators, the company has been rolling out a major restructuring in Europe over the past year. In a first wave of group-wide job cuts in 2025, all of them in support functions, between 1,145 and 1,400 full-time equivalent (FTE) positions were relocated to the company's AM/NS joint venture in India. The company announced in January that a second wave of 5,000 to 6,000 support jobs would be offshored to India. ArcelorMittal claims these will be the subject of negotiation, but as noted earlier, it has failed to negotiate or consult about these changes. The offshoring of jobs to India exposes workers to a labour relations model at AM/NS characterised by union avoidance and structural fragility. The company's operations rely heavily on subcontracting, while permanent employees remain deprived of consolidated trade union representation, and existing unions face persistent resistance to recognition. This systematically undermines freedom of association and meaningful collective bargaining.

In addition, multiple announcements at country-level of terminations of steel production jobs in Europe are keeping workers constantly on edge. The company asserts these are not global cuts but rather a few redundancies here and there. IndustriALL, however, estimates that this "death by a thousand cuts" method adds up to a minimum of 3,000 FTE positions slated for elimination. With 34,000 workers in Europe, the best-case scenario of 6,500 support jobs and 3,000 production jobs cut equals nearly one-third of ArcelorMittal's total workforce on the continent.

And because the Group is making these changes without consulting trade unions or engaging in good faith social dialogue, there is little to no transparency about the conditions and wages of offshored positions, and no consideration of the impacts on those losing their jobs in Europe. The restructuring is being carried out in a way that shatters workers' sense of security and leaves the company's long-term commitment to, and investment in, European industrial capacity in serious doubt.



In addition, the company has delayed or cancelled several decarbonization projects in the region while still demanding public subsidies. Decarbonizing steel is a pillar of the transition to clean energy, and ArcelorMittal [claims](#) its materials "support the wider transition to a lower-carbon economy". Yet in 2025 it [pulled out](#) of a decarbonization project in Germany that had €1.3 billion in state subsidies, with the *Luxembourg Times* reporting the move as "a significant blow to Germany's efforts to decarbonize heavy industry and revive growth". The same year, Opportunity Green [filed a complaint](#) against the company with the Luxembourg OECD National Contact Point, accusing ArcelorMittal of failing to address its climate impact. The NGO contrasted the company's €3 billion in public funding for climate transition with its cancellation or postponement of multiple "green steel projects in Europe" and its continued investment in coal-based production, including in India.

ArcelorMittal's retreat on decarbonization also sits in contrast to its payments to shareholders. SteelWatch recently accused the company of backtracking on its climate commitments and abdicating its role as an industry leader. The organization's [2025 study](#) found that, despite receiving US\$3.5 billion in public subsidies globally, the company "has not taken a single final investment decision on any of its five announced Direct Reduced Iron (DRI) projects in Europe and Canada." And while ArcelorMittal spent only US\$800 million on decarbonization in 2021-24, during the same period it gave US\$12 billion to its shareholders in dividends and buybacks. These actions suggest a company focused more on financialization than on sustainability.

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ArcelorMittal could be leading the way instead of blaming economic uncertainty for its delay... This is not climate leadership – it’s a strategic retreat.

SteelWatch

Governance, decarbonization and disinvestment

Syndex contrasts ArcelorMittal's disinvestment and "harsh restructuring" in Europe with its steel peers Voestalpine, SSAB and Salzgitter, which have – despite the perilous state of the industry – managed to maintain their decarbonization programmes and have either not carried out restructuring or not done so on the same scale as ArcelorMittal. Not coincidentally, these three peers incorporate responsible governance features such as co-determination (Salzgitter), employee shareholding (Voestalpine) and state participation (SSAB).⁴ As Syndex's research has shown, it is possible to pursue decarbonization and responsible governance with limited or no restructuring, but ArcelorMittal has instead put short-term finances ahead of long-term vision. Given the company's strong financials, its lack of investment in decarbonization is a choice.

Europe is no longer a priority market for ArcelorMittal. This division is the group's "milking cow": the aim is to maximise its profits, but its industrial ambitions have been scaled back considerably. Admittedly, an electric arc furnace (EAF) has been announced for Dunkirk (France), but this is a significant step backwards: initially,

two EAFs and a Direct Reduction Plant (DRP) were to be built. Concrete decarbonization announcements for other sites are elusive. Investors should be aware of the risks of this behaviour: ArcelorMittal's underinvestment in the transition to clean steel in Europe is "penny wise and pound foolish", as in the long term it stands to weaken the company in relation to its peers.

The carbon footprint of ArcelorMittal is comparable to that of a small country such as Belgium. This means the company has a key role to play regarding decarbonization, as well as a significant responsibility in relation to global warming. Shifting the management's current strategy and making decarbonization (in Europe and beyond) a priority for ArcelorMittal could bring about a direct impact on mitigating climate change, as this would enable the Group to play its part in meeting Paris Agreement targets and upholding the 1.5°C goal.

Conversely, if no corrective action is taken, ArcelorMittal will not achieve carbon neutrality by 2050, and there are likely to be significant doubts as to whether the 2030 targets will be met.



Implications for investors:

Looking at ArcelorMittal as a whole, one sees multiple inconsistencies: a company slashing jobs in Europe despite those operations' high profitability; a company with robust financials accepting public support for decarbonization but failing to follow through on its climate commitments and undermining its own stated long-term goals for green steel capacity; a supposedly world-class company that devotes considerable capital to share buybacks and dividends while allowing its infrastructure and machinery to deteriorate to the point of causing severe safety risks to its workers; a company professing its commitment to international human rights standards while repeatedly spurning social dialogue and undermining its workers' fundamental rights.

These inconsistencies, aside from their social and environmental implications, have exposed ArcelorMittal to legal, operational, financial and reputational risks, which in turn bring risks to its shareholders. They have the right – and the responsibility – to raise these issues in their engagement of the company. The final section proposes sample questions to guide this engagement.

⁴ Syndex, "Blast Furnaces and Underhanded Tactics: Who is Playing Fair?", December 2025.

Investor questions

Below are some suggested questions for investors to raise with ArcelorMittal, based on the issues discussed in this brief.

- 1 **Social dialogue:** ArcelorMittal stands accused of ignoring its own workers and their unions as key resources in addressing OSH and other issues. Its refusal to bargain in good faith about working conditions, wages and benefits has raised operational and legal risks for the company, as seen in multiple countries. What will the company do to uphold its responsibility to maintain social dialogue with its most important asset, its workforce?
- 2 **EWC:** Why is ArcelorMittal violating EU law, and its own European Works Council agreement, in relation to information and consultation of worker representatives? Will it agree to consult its EWC on restructuring and other major issues that are affecting its workers in multiple countries?
- 3 **OSH/disinvestment:** ArcelorMittal's failure to invest in its physical plant continues to lead to serious OSH risks for its workers and significant operational risks, as seen, for example, in Mexico and Brazil. What concrete measures will the company take to address this?
- 4 **Job cuts in Europe:** With its European operations a major contributor to the Group's earnings, why is ArcelorMittal cutting jobs and sites on the continent?
- 5 **Decarbonization:** ArcelorMittal pits European sites against one another and uses public subsidies as leverage, but even after securing what it wants, the Group still has not announced the expected investments. What does the future hold for decarbonization in Europe? Has it been abandoned?
- 6 **Transparency and reporting:** How does ArcelorMittal explain or justify excluding its joint ventures from sustainability reporting, even in cases where it is legally required to include these?
- 7 **Equal treatment of contractors:** Will ArcelorMittal Liberia hold its contractors to the same human rights standards that it claims to subscribe to? Will it respect security workers' right to unionize, given the Ministry of Labour's recognition of their right in 2025?



For more information, please contact

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Please note that this brief is for informational purposes only. It is not intended to provide and should not be relied on for investment, legal, tax or accounting advice. Investors should consult their own advisors and investment professionals to evaluate the merits and risks of any investment.

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