
Trade unions in the Czech Republic

Martin Myant

Report 115

etui.

Trade unions in the Czech Republic

—
Martin Myant

Report 115

european trade union institute

Martin Myant is a professor at the University of the West of Scotland. He has written or edited eleven books and numerous articles and reports on economic and political developments in central Europe, especially the former Czechoslovakia and the Czech Republic. His most recent book is *Transition Economies: Political Economy in Russia, Eastern Europe and Central Asia* (Hoboken NJ: Wiley, 2010, with Jan Drahokoupil). He has written on trade union development in the Czech Republic and has been president of the higher education section of the union the Educational Institute of Scotland and has also held office in the UK's University and College Union.

Brussels, 2010
©Publisher: ETUI aisbl, Brussels
All rights reserved
Print: ETUI Printshop, Brussels

D/2010/10.574/26
ISBN: 978-2-87452-191-1 (print version)
ISBN: 978-2-87452-192-8 (pdf version)

The ETUI is financially supported by the European Union. The European Union is not responsible for any use made of the information contained in this publication.

Contents

Mapping unions in the new member states.....	5
1. Introduction.....	11
2. The heritage of the past.....	15
3. The industrial relations system.....	17
4. The labour movement in general.....	25
5. Union structure.....	31
6. The development of union membership.....	45
7. Conclusion.....	53
Sources and acknowledgements.....	54
References.....	54
Annexes	
Availability and reliability of union and labour force data.....	56
List of events in the field of politics and industrial relations.....	57
Current union set-up (as at 2009).....	62

Mapping unions in the new member states

This report on the Czech trade unions forms part of a wide-ranging project, initiated and coordinated by the European Trade Union Institute (ETUI), which aims to map changes in unionisation and the varying organisational structures of unions in the ‘new member states’ (NMS) of the European Union (EU).¹ Although there is a burgeoning literature on the present and future prospects of unionism which includes some of the countries in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) (for example, Gall 2009; Phelan 2009, 2007), trade union morphology in these countries is rarely studied. Moreover, the smaller countries are often omitted, as are the Mediterranean islands, Cyprus and Malta. While rigorously scrutinised data on union development are available for almost all countries that joined the EU before 2004, basic information on trade unions in the NMS is largely lacking. This is not to say that no data are available on union membership and structure for the NMS.²

At the time of the EU’s enlargement to the east, pioneering research was conducted on the representativeness of the ‘social partners’ in the NMS (UCL-INT 2004). Since then, similar reports focusing on particular economic sectors have been published regularly by the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, although not from a historical perspective.³ Additionally, the European Social Survey has provided data on union membership for most NMS.⁴ Finally, although largely based on the research mentioned above, the Database on Institutional Characteristics of Trade Unions, Wage Setting, State Intervention and Social Pacts (ICTWSS) of the Amsterdam Institute for Advanced Labour Studies includes limited quantitative data on trade unions in the NMS (Visser 2009).⁵ Apart from the ICTWSS database, however, union membership data for the NMS countries remain restricted to certain years and are difficult to compare; disaggregated information is extremely rare (Carley 2009, 2004, 2003; Kohl 2008; Lis 2008; Visser 2003). Given the often political nature of membership claims, published membership

-
1. For more information on the project, please contact Kurt Vandaele (kvandaele@etui.org) or Jeremy Waddington (jeremy.waddington@manchester.ac.uk).
 2. Reliable comparative data on union membership and density are also available on non-European countries, in particular for OECD member states (Visser 2006; Visser *et al.* 2009).
 3. See <http://www.eurofound.europa.eu>
 4. See <http://www.europeansocialsurvey.org>
 5. Golden (2009) and her colleagues also developed a database on industrial relations. The database contains annual data on unions, employers, collective bargaining and labour market institutions. The geographical coverage of the database comprises 20 member of the OECD but the OECD member countries of the CEE economies are not included. Coverage starts in 1950 and ends in 2000.

data on unions in CEE countries are often inaccurate, particularly during the initial period of the transformation from centrally planned economies to post-communist market economies.

The ICTWSS database covers 34 countries between 1960 and 2007 and provides numerous quantitative indicators on industrial relations. The ICTWSS database incorporates material from several databases, including that on the ‘Development of Trade Unions in Western European Societies’ (DUES). The DUES database is the result of a long-term endeavour – the project started in 1985 and a historical data handbook was published fifteen years later – and provides information on the trade union movements in fifteen Western European economies since 1945 (Ebbinghaus and Visser 2000b). As a statistical compendium, *Trade Unions in Western Europe since 1945* offers an important basis for studying trade union trends over time and across geographical space within Western Europe. In focussing on the provision of a cross-national data set, the handbook is biased towards quantitative analysis (Hyman 2001: 206). Nevertheless, even though statistical methods are only ‘primitive tools as far as explanation is concerned’ (Sayer 1992: 198), the database helps to provide a comparative understanding of trade union development. Such an understanding can be enhanced if the quantitative patterns and relationships are complemented with causal analyses that place them within the evolving context and structures of capitalist society.

Understandably, unions in the NMS – particularly those based in the CEE economies – were not included in the data handbook in 2000, ‘given the short time span and still developing state of unionism’ (Ebbinghaus and Visser 2000a: 10). However, the reasons for undertaking union morphology research on those economies are now more compelling. First, the temporal scope can be extended to a sufficient medium-term historical perspective. For obvious reasons, the year 1990 will, for most CEE countries, be the first year of data collection, although free and independent unions started a decade earlier in Poland, with the strike movement at the shipyards of Gdańsk and the formation of *Solidarność* in 1980.⁶ Additionally, with EU accession, the transformation process towards unfettered capitalism, with distinctive industrial relations systems based on weak macro-corporatist structures, has been accomplished (Hassel 2009; King 2007; Kohl and Platzer 2004). Union structures above industry or sectoral level have also become relatively stable. Nevertheless, for a range of different reasons, particularly unions in the CEE countries have had to wage a defensive struggle in the wake of the fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of the Soviet Union (Crowley 2004; Crowley and Ost 2001; Dimitrova and Petkov 2005; Kallaste and Woolfson 2009; Kubicek 1999, 2004; Ost 2009; Vanhuysse 2007). Moreover, de-unionisation in CEE has been more marked than in any other region of the world and explains, to a certain extent, why the pattern of unionisation across the EU member states has turned into a ‘mildly convergent trend’ (EC 2009:21; cf. Pedersini 2010:5-13) today.

6. For several countries, data coverage starts some years later because only then did they become independent states. This is the case for the Baltic States, the Czech and Slovak Republics and Slovenia.

Even though increasing union membership is only one of the resources for re-empowering the labour movement or enhancing union capacity (cf. Lévesque and Murray 2010), facilitating and encouraging academic research on trade union recruitment techniques, organisational changes and outcomes with regard to the composition of membership is undoubtedly worthwhile for assessing the ‘political geography of union organising’ (Herod 1998: 17). As a first step towards a better understanding of ‘the link between union structure, practices and effectiveness’ (Fiorito and Jarley 2008: 203–204), this ETUI project seeks to provide systematic cross-sectional and time series data on union membership and structures in the NMS. Additionally, for each country a historical profile of the formation and development of the trade union movement will be written by country experts. Together with a discussion of methodology and working methods, which are in essence similar to those of the DUES project, the historical profiles will be bundled and published in a first book volume. In the meantime, reports will be published by the ETUI on single countries. The country reports should be considered as interim reports since the Annex presents information only on the organisational histories of trade unions that are still active today. Additional time series data on unionisation and information on union formation and organisational changes (including on dissolved unions) will be provided in the upcoming book.

This report, written by Martin Myant, is the first to focus on the labour movement in a CEE country.⁷ The author convincingly demonstrates that history matters, as indicated by his use of the oxymoron ‘continuity within discontinuity’. Breaking with its communist past, the old union movement in Czechoslovakia moulted, via strike committees, to form a new ‘union centre’ after the ‘Velvet Revolution’ of 1989. But the newly established *Československá konfederace odborových svazů* (ČSKOS, Czechoslovak Confederation of Trade Unions) was able to keep union property and most of the personnel; to remain dominant within the trade union landscape; and to maintain the same organising principle, namely branch unions – which adds up to a large measure of continuity. At the same time, it is possible to understand why the Czech labour movement embraced an apparently decentralised structure, with a prominent spot for the ‘basic organisations’, only with reference to the perceived ‘over-centralisation’ of the union structure in the communist past – in other words, discontinuity. The re-enforced authority of the ‘basic organisations’ could also explain why the overall union structure has been relatively stable since the early 1990s, although some smaller unions left and others joined the *Českomoravská konfederace odborových svazů* (ČMKOS), the successor of ČSKOS after the formation of the Czech Republic in 1993. In contrast to the union structure, union membership has changed drastically. To differing degrees all unions have seen a decline in their membership, resulting in an overall decline in union density which today stands around 10 per cent.⁸

7. The first country report dealt with the trade unions in Malta, see Baldachinno (2009) *Trade unions in Malta*. Brussels: ETUI. Available at: <http://www.etui.org/index.php/research/activities/Labour-and-the-modernisation-of-Trade-Unions/Reports-and-working-papers/Report-110.-Trade-unions-in-Malta>

8. It should be noted that this rate is based only on ČMKOS membership figures and includes inactive members, such as pensioners.

With a low union density, a decentralised bargaining system and the unions' established integration in the 'social dialogue' structure at the national level, it is tempting to see parallels between the unions in the Czech Republic – and, indeed, in other CEE countries – and the position and role of the French trade unions. Unions in France may be viewed, similarly, as weak in terms of membership, with collective bargaining playing a somewhat muted role alongside very prominent government involvement in industrial relations. However, there are also clear differences. Whereas collective bargaining coverage in France is high and industrial relations are adversarial and 'highly politicized' (Hyman and Gumbrell-McCormick 2010: 317), the Czech bargaining coverage is at the lower end of the scale and the (branch) unions' bargaining style is (far) more acquiescent. While professional unions, particularly in the transport sector, make more frequent use of the strike weapon – a fact that reflects their stronger workplace bargaining power – they are fairly unlikely to merge with other unions; and even if social protest in 1994 and 2008 was massive, extending beyond the unions' membership, the tradition of labour militancy is weak in the Czech Republic.

One might, indeed, in order to characterise the identity of the Czech trade unions, use the adjective 'velvet', a description originally employed to emphasise the non-violent overthrow of the communist regime in Czechoslovakia. This label was inspired by the Velvet Underground, one of the favourite rock bands of Václav Havel, the former 'dissident' and the last president of Czechoslovakia and first president of the Czech Republic. While the lyrics of Lou Reed, the main songwriter of 'the Velvets', do not adopt a moral stance on the topics referred to, Myant, the author of this report, offers more than a description of the evolving union structure in the Czech Republic. In fact, his well-balanced report could, with its rather pessimistic undertone, also be read as a 'wake-up call' for the Czech unions. On the basis of their membership figures, the Czech unions could today be regarded as Lilliputians and, what is more – as Myant stresses – as shackled and bound, like Gulliver, by former organisational choices. But there is more to this tale than gloomy path dependency (cf. Kallaste and Woolfson 2009; Mrozowicki *et al.* 2010). Insofar as the reasons for union decline are not solely the result of changes in the union environment, one should take into account also the strategic choices made by the unions themselves. A focus on such voluntarism yields indications that, partly as a result of their own efforts, Czech unions may be 'beginning to see the light' – to use the title of a song by the Velvet Underground – and the sooner this happens the better, one might add.

Kurt Vandaele
Senior researcher, ETUI

References

- Carley, M. (2002) *Industrial relations in the EU Member States and candidate countries*. Dublin: European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, July. Available at: <http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/eiro/2002/07/feature/tn0207104f.htm>
- Carley, M. (2004) *Trade union membership 1993–2003*. Dublin: European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, May. Available at: <http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/eiro/2004/03/update/TN0403105U.htm>
- Carley, M. (2009) *Trade union membership 2003–2008*. Dublin: European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, September. Available at: <http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/docs/eiro/tn0904019s/tn0904019s.pdf>
- Crowley, S. and D. Ost (eds) (2001) *Workers after workers' states. Labor and politics in postcommunist Eastern Europe*, Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.
- Crowley, S. (2004) Explaining labor weakness in postcommunist Europe. Historical legacies and comparative perspective, *East European Politics and Societies* 18(3), 394–429.
- Dimitrova, D. and K. Petkov (2005) Comparative overview. Changing profiles, action and outcomes for organized labour in Central and Eastern Europe, in D. Dimitrova and J. Vilroix (eds) *Trade union strategies in Central and Eastern Europe. Towards decent work*, Budapest: ILO, 15–62.
- Ebbinghaus, B. and J. Visser (2000a) A guide to the handbook, in B. Ebbinghaus and J. Visser (eds) *Trade unions in Western Europe since 1945*, Basingstoke: Macmillan, 3–32.
- Ebbinghaus, B. and J. Visser (eds) (2000b) *Trade unions in Western Europe since 1945*, Basingstoke: Macmillan.
- EC (2009) *Industrial relations in Europe – 2008*, Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities.
- Fiorito, J. and P. Jarley (2008) Trade union morphology, in P. Blyton *et al.* (eds) *The SAGE handbook of industrial relations*, London: Sage, 189–208.
- Gall, G. (2009) *The future of union organising. Building for tomorrow*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Golden, M., P. Lange and M. Wallerstein (2009) *Union centralization among advanced industrial societies: an empirical study*, Los Angeles: UCLA, Department of Political Science. Available at: <http://www.shelley.polisci.ucla.edu>
- Hassel, A. (2009) Policies and politics in social pacts in Europe, *European Journal of Industrial Relations*, 15(1), 7–26.
- Herod, A. (1998) The spatiality of labour unionism: a review essay, in A. Herod (ed.) *Organizing the landscape. Geographical perspectives on labor unionism*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1–44.
- Hyman, R. (2001) Trade union research and cross-national comparison, *European Journal of Industrial Relations*, 7(2), 203–32.
- Hyman, R. and R. Gumbrell-McCormick (2010) Trade unions, politics and parties: is a new configuration possible?, *Transfer*, 16 (3), 315–331.
- Kallaste, E. and C. Woolfson (2009) The paradox of post-communist trade unionism: 'you can't want what you can't imagine', *Economic and Labour Relations Review*, 20 (1), 93–109.
- King, L. P. (2007) Central European capitalism in comparative perspective, in B. Hancké, M. Rhodes and M. Thatcher (eds) *Beyond varieties of capitalism. Conflict, contradictions and complementarities in the European Economy*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 307–50.
- Kohl, H. (2008) Where do trade unions stand in Eastern Europe today? Stock-taking after EU enlargement, *Internationale Politik und Gesellschaft*, 3, 107–30.

- Kohl, H. and H.-W. Platzer (2004) *Industrial relations in Central and Eastern Europe. Transformation and integration. A comparison of the eight new EU member states*, Brussels: ETUI.
- Kubicek, P. J. (1999) Organized labor in postcommunist states. Will the Western sun set on it, too?, *Comparative Politics*, 32 (1), 83–102.
- Kubicek, P. J. (2004) *Organized labor in postcommunist states. From solidarity to infirmity*, Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh.
- Lévesque, C. and G. Murray (2010) Understanding union power: resources and capabilities for renewing union capacity, *Transfer*, 16 (3), 333–350.
- Lis, A. (2008) Trade union strength in an EU-wide comparison, in J. Kuznir and H. Pleines (eds) *Trade unions from post-socialist member states in EU governance*, Stuttgart: Ibidem-Verlag, 43–56.
- Mrozowicki A., V. Pulignano and G. Van Hootegem (2010) Worker agency and trade union renewal: the case of Poland, *Work, Employment and Society*, 24 (2), 221–240.
- Ost, D. (2009) The consequences of postcommunism. Trade unions in Eastern Europe's future, *East European Politics and Societies*, 23 (1), 13–33.
- Pedersini, R. (2010) *Trade union strategies to recruit new groups of workers*. Dublin: European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, May. Available at: <http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/docs/eiro/tn0901028s/tn0901028s.pdf>
- Phelan, G. (ed.) (2007) *Trade union revitalisation. Trends and prospects in 34 countries*, Bern: Peter Lang.
- Phelan, C. (ed.) (2009) *Trade unionism since 1945: Towards a global history. Volume 1: Western Europe, Eastern Europe, Africa and the Middle East*, Bern: Peter Lang.
- UCL-IST (2004) *Monographs on the situation of social partners in the acceding and candidate countries. Intersectoral level*, Louvain-la-Neuve: Institut des Sciences du Travail.
- Sayer, A. (1992) *Method in social science. A realist approach*, London: Hutchinson.
- Vanhuyse P. (2007) Workers without power. Agency, legacies, and labour decline in East European varieties of capitalism, *Sociologický časopis / Czech Sociological Review*, 43 (3), 495–522.
- Visser, J. (2003) Unions and unionism around the world, in J. T. Addison and C. Schnabel (eds) *International handbook of trade unions*, Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 366–413.
- Visser, J. (2006) Union membership statistics in 24 countries, *Monthly Labor Review*, 129(1), 38–49.
- Visser, J. (2009) *Institutional characteristics of trade unions, wage setting, state intervention and social pacts (ICTWSS), an international database*, Amsterdam: Institute for Advanced Labour Studies (AIAS). Available at: <http://www.uva-aias.net/207>
- Visser, J., S. Martin and P. Tergeist (2009) *Trade union members and union density in OECD countries*, Paris: OECD.

1. Introduction

The Czech Republic is a small, landlocked, industrially-developed country in central Europe with a population of just over 10 million. It emerged at the start of 1993 as the larger part of the former Czechoslovakia. Its labour movement developed from the latter half of the nineteenth century within the Austro-Hungarian Empire and, from 1918 to 1939, within an independent, democratic Czechoslovak state. Communist domination from 1948 to 1989 led to the unification and centralisation of the union movement and its subordination to political power. After 1989, a more diverse union movement emerged which could assert its independence from both government and employers. At the national level, one union confederation dominates. From 1990 to 1992, this was the *Československá konfederace odborových svazů* (ČSKOS, Czechoslovak Confederation of Trade Unions, or Czech and Slovak Confederation of Trade Unions).⁹ After the break-up of Czechoslovakia at the end of 1992, the union organisations at the Czech and Slovak levels continued to negotiate with their respective governments, taking on many of the issues that had previously been settled at the federal level. The main centre in the Czech Republic therefore became the *Českomoravská komora odborových svazů*, later renamed the *Českomoravská konfederace odborových svazů* (ČMKOS, Czech-Moravian Chamber [from 1998 renamed Confederation] of Trade Unions).¹⁰

As the following analysis shows, the development of this new union movement was heavily conditioned by its – and the country’s – history. An important element in this was an aspiration to avoid the perceived over-centralisation of the past. Instead of a unified movement with standardised activities and control from above, the new unions were to have full autonomy, no commanding centre and a maximum decentralisation of power into ‘basic organisations’. These were the units bringing together all grades of employees who worked under one employer, as defined in law. They were carried forward from the state socialist past. This combination of continuity with discontinuity led to important differences from most western European Union (EU) movements in which members’ loyalty is often, in the first instance, to a confederation or to a union based on an occupation, skill or branch of economic activity. The power of basic organisations within Czech unions is a recurrent theme in what follows.

9. For a global overview of the acronyms of the confederations and trade unions, please see the annex on the current union set-up.

10. The first title for the Czech section within ČSKOS from when it was founded in 1990 until November 1992 was *Českomoravská komora České a Slovenské konfederace odborových svazů* (ČMK ČSKOS, the Czech-Moravian Chamber of the Czechoslovak Confederation of Trade Unions).

The industrial relations system is inevitably characterised by a sharp discontinuity from the past in which unions had not been able to negotiate with employers over pay and conditions. The new system was consciously modelled on collective bargaining as practiced in much of Western Europe, but there were some differences. Negotiations or bargaining took place at three levels; enterprise, sectoral and with the government. However, much of the day-to-day work of representing members was based on upholding rights enshrined in labour law which were only rarely improved through collective bargaining. Reasons for this can be sought in weak traditions and experience of collective bargaining, in the nature of some Czech employers and in the success of the main union centre in defending a reasonable level of legal protection for employees. That, in turn, gave a prominent role to the centre, despite some early expectations that it would have little to do, as it negotiated with and influenced governments and parliament. Thus the nature of the industrial relations system served to increase the prominence of the main union centre.

A guiding principle in the years after 1989 was to avoid identification with particular political parties. This was at first partly a pragmatic decision as parties were slow to take shape, but it also reflected a determination to break from the subordination to the ruling Communist Party of the state socialist period. However, it was recognised from the start that unions should try to influence government decisions that had implications for employment relations and social conditions. Thinking on how this should be done evolved by trial and error as ČMKOS acquired expertise in assessing and influencing governments and learned how to combine negotiations and discussions with pressure from mass protest actions. ČMKOS also learned to expect the best reception among politicians from the Social Democratic party, which gained popularity from a low base in the 1990s.¹¹ This perceived political closeness is frequently exaggerated and cited as a key objection to the main union centre by its rival the *Asociace samostatných odborů* (ASO, Association of Independent Trade Unions), by unions that have left ČMKOS and by unions that have always been independent.

The section on trade union structure indicates that political orientation has been, at most, only one factor contributing to a degree of fragmentation among Czech unions. Decentralisation in 1990 left basic organisations, with a few exceptions, maintaining the one-workplace-one-union principle. Newly-formed unions, therefore, almost invariably represented all grades of employees within a branch. However, they varied greatly in size and efforts to achieve mergers have met with little success. The trend has rather been towards small unions breaking away from established unions or emerging from scratch. This varies between sectors, depending on how favourable conditions are for inde-

11. The Czech Social Democratic Party, unlike similar parties in Hungary and Poland, was not created by the transformation of the old ruling Communist Party. Instead, it claimed continuity from the foundation of a first Social Democratic party in 1874 and was reformed in 1989 by returning political exiles and former dissident politicians. New members, as with other parties across the political spectrum, included former members of the ruling party, but not whole organisations. A congress resolution of 1995 ruled out cooperation at government level with the Communist Party.

pendent union activity. It is facilitated by some specific features of the industrial relations system and of industrial relations and trade union law.

The final substantial section of the study indicates the extent of the decline in union membership. This has been almost continuous and almost universal, with only a few unions in a few years experiencing membership growth. Part of the explanation lies in structural and organisational changes in the economy, but the relative failure to recruit new members in new workplaces must also be explained. A number of factors are considered, but one that stands out is the lack of a strong tradition of trade union activity following the experience of state socialism. Indeed, unions are easily portrayed by their opponents as belonging to the state socialist past, although that was a period in which they were unable to perform their most important functions of providing collective representation and organising collective action. Czech unions have tried a variety of ways to reverse the decline in membership. None have proved successful so far.

This negative conclusion needs to be set alongside evidence presented throughout the study of the union movement's ability to influence labour and industrial relations policies directly and to raise a voice on wider economic and social issues. Indeed, despite the substantial decline in membership, unions seem to have retained as strong a voice as they ever had on the national stage.

2. The heritage of the past

The first Czech trade union dates from 1862, when print workers established a society providing help in welfare provision, expanding into education and social activities and making the first demands relating to pay later in the decade (Kraus 1998: 13–36). This example was quickly followed by metal workers and construction workers and their present-day unions claim added legitimacy from this long heritage. In the inter-war period, trade unions were divided by political affiliations and nationality between 10 main centres, while further independent unions also existed (Kárník 2002: 445). Total membership rose to 2.4 million in 1937, 70 per cent of all employees within the social insurance system.¹² Around one-third of union members were in centres linked to the Social Democrats. Unions undertook collective bargaining, provided individual benefits and were also involved in the unemployment insurance system, such that membership of a recognised union was a precondition for receiving benefits.

Fragmentation was greatly reduced during the Nazi occupation, when all Czech unions were either banned or united under two centres controlled from above. After liberation in May 1945 the whole movement was united under one centre, partly as an explicit reaction to the weakness created by the fragmentation of earlier years. About two-thirds of Czech employees were soon organised in the *Revoluční odborové hnutí* (ROH, Revolutionary Trade Union Movement) (calculated from data in Bloomfield 1979: 130). The Communist Party established a monopoly of power in February 1948 and quickly suppressed all political opposition. Unions were then firmly subordinated to the party and state, unable to express any independent positions or to bargain over pay. They still had formal powers to oversee health and safety and to ensure adherence by management to existing labour law. They also signed formal agreements with management which included commitments to encourage greater work effort in exchange for support for social and recreational activities and for a range of individual benefits. This gave unions a distinct position in society and there was almost universal individual membership (for explanations of their activities, see Kupka 1974; Richter and Kouřil 1970; Stašek 2005).

The initiative for the transformation of this union movement came from strike committees – estimated to number around 6,000 – formed in workplaces

¹² The social security system was nominally compulsory for all employees, but a small minority remained unrecorded.

during the 'velvet revolution' which ended communist power in November and December 1989. There were thoughts of creating completely new unions, but activists from the strike committees quickly dominated most basic organisations and opted for a manoeuvre that enabled new unions to claim legal continuity with the old ones and thereby take over their property. This would otherwise have been confiscated by the state, as happened for the Communist Party. There was also some continuity in personnel, with a very imprecise estimate of up to 40 per cent of representatives and 60 per cent of paid officials inherited unchanged.¹³ In a strong reaction against the perceived centralism of the past, basic organisations became the fundamental unit in union structures, able to choose whether to remain in the same branch union as before or to join another or to remain independent. The 17 branch unions, each covering a branch of industry or broad economic sector, that had existed before soon split into more than 60 unions. These successors to the old union movement then voted to dissolve ROH and most then joined ČSKOS at its foundation in March 1990. Unlike the previous central body, this had no power over its affiliates. The previous central body had employed 2,300 officials.¹⁴ By 1996, the Czech centre had only 70 permanent employees (Fišera 1996: 16).

These were big changes, but there were also some important points of continuity. The principle for most unions remained one union for one workplace, organising all grades of employees. Branch unions, covering all employees within a sector, remained the dominant form, albeit supplemented by a few professional unions. Membership dues remained, as before, 1 per cent of pay, and basic organisations continued to use their resources to provide social and recreational activities. This did become less important than in the past, but was only gradually eclipsed by new roles in collective bargaining. Above all, there was continuity in unions' wealth. The total value of all union property was estimated at the start as equivalent to 1.8 per cent of GDP, but any such valuation was speculative and later figures were somewhat lower. This included bank deposits and some very desirable hotels and offices. About one-third went to basic organisations. The remainder went into a new organisation with individual unions holding shares in proportion to their membership at the time (Zárubová and Kašparová 1993).¹⁵

The new unions, it seemed, could make a fresh start, no longer tied to past policies, but strengthened by the wealth unions had built up under state socialism. It was a fresh start, but elements of the heritage of the past, and of the changes that were intended to mark a clear break, were to create difficulties for Czech unions in the coming decades.

13. I. Pleskot (1992) '17. listopadu', *Sondy*, No. 47, p. 4.

14. *Odborář*, 1990, No. 1, p. 31.

15. R. Falbr, *Sondy*, 1995, No. 28, p. 10 and 'Jak se kalily miliardy', *Ekonom*, 29 January 2009.

3. The industrial relations system

A simple early expectation from the union side was that bargaining would develop at three levels (for discussion of the development of industrial relations and union thinking, see Pollert 1997a, 1997b; Myant 1993). The national level would set a very general framework. Sectoral agreements would define pay and conditions across similar employers and details would be filled in at the enterprise level. In practice, the national level proved particularly important for negotiating over the legal framework which was important for individual employee protection. This gave the confederation, despite aspirations for a decentralised structure, a crucial and very high-profile role. Sectoral agreements were of some significance for pay, but of little significance for working conditions, with the exception of transport, with its specific patterns of working hours. Enterprise-level bargaining was generally the most important for pay and material benefits.

3.1 The legal framework

The framework for collective bargaining was set out in laws passed in late 1990 and early 1991 that amended the *Zákoník práce* (Labour Code). This body of employment law was originally set out in 1965 and, in its version as amended to the end of 2009, ran to 396 paragraphs and almost 60,000 words. These initial, and some subsequent, changes led to a liberalisation of employment relations, but ČMKOS believed that the union side had succeeded in ensuring that the law guaranteed basic protection of wage levels (ultimately protected by a minimum wage), health and safety, maximum working hours and minimum holiday entitlements, as well as protection against arbitrary dismissal and various forms of discrimination (cf. ČMKOS 2010b: 17). Trade unions lost some powers that they had had, at least nominally, under state socialism when these were judged incompatible with a market system. Unions lost the right and duty ‘to participate in the development, management and control of activities’ of the employing organisation, but they retained the right of access to information (Myant 1993: 67). They also retained substantial power over ensuring health and safety at work and they were to be consulted on dismissals, redundancies, overtime, working on public holidays and other abnormal shift patterns. There were frequent amendments in later years, often adding more detail to set the terms for more flexible work patterns and also to allow for specific conditions in particular occupations.

Collective bargaining over pay and conditions led to binding agreements, but less favourable outcomes for employees than these legal stipulations were prohibited. An oddity was that a valid agreement required the signatures of all unions operating in a workplace, no matter how small their membership, if they insisted on participating. This was to have implications for the viability of some very small unions. In a reaction against the centralism of the communist period intended to allow the greatest freedom from central control, unions could be created and registered with the Ministry of the Interior on the basis of only three signatures. No law on strikes was ever agreed. A draft outlawing political strikes was condemned by the union side in June 1990 as ‘bizarre and ridiculous’¹⁶ and no subsequent government was able to revive it. Restrictions on strikes were specified under the law on collective bargaining, such that they could not be held while an agreement was under negotiation. All other strikes were legal in view of the Charter of Human Rights, approved by parliament on 8 February 1991 and taking precedence over all Czech law. This asserts the right to strike in general terms, unless specifically qualified by other laws.

3.2 Sectoral-level bargaining

As already indicated, sectoral agreements proved less prominent than the union side had initially hoped. These are recorded by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and 76 such agreements were signed in the period 2007–2009, covering much of manufacturing, construction, market services and road transport. A ČMKOS estimate, covering its own affiliates only, points to coverage of 24 per cent of all employees in 2009 (ČMKOS 2010b: 28). The coverage fluctuated a little, depending on the willingness of employers to sign, which varied from one year to another. There was a clear downward trend in the late 1990s, reaching a low point in 1998 when sectoral agreements signed by ČMKOS-affiliated unions covered only 11 per cent of the labour force (Myant and Smith 1999: 273). Recovery followed as the coverage of agreements increased in construction and transport and as agreements were signed in parts of the public sector. However, sectoral agreements were limited in parts of the private sector by the weakness of employers’ organisations and by their lack of internal discipline. In the food and the print sectors, unified employers’ organisations ceased to exist altogether, partly because important foreign companies were not interested in joining and, in the case of food, because the active employers’ organisations also remained fragmented in very narrow branches of the industry.

The significance of these agreements varied widely. Some provided a sound minimum base from which unions could bargain at the enterprise level. Often, however, they allowed some firms to opt out, or gave leeway to break agreements, should business conditions worsen. In some cases, agreements set out little more than the points that should be covered in enterprise agreements, with blank spaces still to be completed. There were also cases where

16. I. Pleskot, *Práce*, 21 September 1990.

sectoral agreements were signed even when unions lacked representation in more than a few of the enterprises covered. This applied in part of retailing and occasionally in hotels – sectoral agreements were signed in 1992–1994 and again in 2004 – where the union negotiated with an employer representing many more employees than its own membership. In this case, the sectoral agreement was a foothold for union activity, but it obviously remains an open question whether even very basic agreements could be enforced in workplaces where no union organisation existed.

Sectoral agreements were a matter of ongoing political controversy, with hostility from some employers and from some on the right of the political spectrum. Antipathy was strongest towards the establishment of the authority in collective bargaining law for the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs to extend the scope of these agreements to non-signatory firms. This was used frequently in the years up to 1995, but then not at all until the minority Social Democrat government came to power in 1998. Extension was then used in construction, textiles and transport, sectors in which many small employers were paying well below sectoral average wage levels. This contributed substantially to the increased coverage referred to above. However, even then, extension could not ensure total coverage owing to the difficulties involved in defining the boundaries of a sector.

3.3 Enterprise-level bargaining

The enterprise level is the most important for collective bargaining. There are no comprehensive data, but ČMKOS estimated that about 80 per cent of employees were covered by collective agreements in the period 1991–93 (ČMKOS 2010a: 64–65). Its own affiliates signed enterprise-level agreements covering 29 per cent of all employees in 2009 (ČMKOS 2010b: 28). The total for the economy as a whole is therefore likely to be somewhat over 30 per cent. Unfortunately, it is not possible to follow trends over time with precise figures as ČMKOS membership changed and this altered the coverage of that union centre.¹⁷ The content of agreements typically includes pay, working time and other benefits in enterprises, but pay is set by parliament in state employment and public services.

Some unions have calculated the improvements in pay and the money-value of further benefits. These consistently point to substantial gains. An analysis by *Odborový svaz KOVO*¹⁸ (Czech Metalworkers' Federation KOVO) (Souček

¹⁷ Wage surveys conducted by the Czech Statistical Office included a question on whether pay was determined by collective bargaining. In 2002, the figure was almost 50 per cent, with pay slightly below the average. In 2009, the figure was 41 per cent, with pay slightly higher than the average ([http://www.czso.cz/csu/2003edicniplan.nsf/t/6B003A90E9/\\$File/3109rA07.pdf](http://www.czso.cz/csu/2003edicniplan.nsf/t/6B003A90E9/$File/3109rA07.pdf); [http://www.czso.cz/csu/2010edicniplan.nsf/t/2A0046F49B/\\$File/w310910A07.pdf](http://www.czso.cz/csu/2010edicniplan.nsf/t/2A0046F49B/$File/w310910A07.pdf)). However, this was not the principal focus of the study and the reliability is unclear for both the absolute level and the changes in that level.

¹⁸ This union, in line with a few others, used capital letters for its title, giving the appearance of an acronym. The word 'kov' means 'metal'.

2006), the largest ČMKOS affiliate which operates in steel, engineering and electronics, showed additional benefits from bargaining, such as shorter working hours, worth the equivalent of 19 per cent of the value of wages. It also showed that pay in 2005 was 5 per cent above the sectoral average where basic organisations negotiated a collective agreement and 10 per cent below the average where they did not. This suggests that the presence of a union organisation as such conferred little benefit, but that there were clear gains when it signed a collective agreement.

This was suggestive, but not conclusive evidence of the benefits of union activity. A rigorous study would require a comparison of directly comparable work in workplaces where unions operate with results in workplaces from which they are absent. It is also unclear how to interpret the cases where no agreement was signed. This was quite a common phenomenon, covering 23 per cent of employees where basic organisations existed in 2009 (calculated from ČMKOS 2010b: 28). This could reflect economic conditions in the firm, in which case even an active union organisation might have been unable to secure better results. It could also reflect lack of will on the part of the union organisation, suggesting a clear benefit where organisations are active.

This is possible. There were basic organisations for which bargaining was not a major focus of activity. They were still concentrating on the social and recreational sides. These 'passive attitudes of certain trade union organisations' (Kubínková 1997: 16) had exasperated union officials over the years. In 1996 the then ČMKOS president exclaimed 'why do trade unionists still feel it necessary to keep the lion's share of membership contributions in basic organisations and use them to organise things that have nothing to do with union activity?' (OS TOK 1996). Such practices clearly continued, although it is unclear whether they dominated activities of basic organisations to such an extent as to divert attention from collective bargaining. One indirect indicator of their likely importance was the persistence of basic organisations even after the closure of workplaces, as retired and unemployed members continued with their recreational and leisure activities. Six out of 81 basic organisations in the union representing glass workers had no employed members in 2008.

While bargaining with employers set pay and some important conditions, basic union organisations relied heavily on the Labour Code for protecting individual, and some collective, employment conditions. Indeed, versions of the Labour Code have been the best-selling ČMKOS publications and its own journal contains regular accounts of legal disputes. The major issues are dismissal without good cause and imposing excessive working hours. The law is also a continual point of reference for such diverse issues as dress codes, variations in work patterns, minor work accidents and penalties for small breaches of discipline. The limitation on the scope of collective bargaining reflects partly the reasonable levels of protection the law provides, partly the failure of sector-, or enterprise-level, bargaining to provide better terms and partly the unwillingness of many employers to resolve issues of potential dispute by less formal means. All unions either employ their own lawyers, sometimes constituting one-third of specialist staff, or have regular contract with an independ-

ent lawyer. ČMKOS also provided seven regional legal advice centres in 2006 (rising to 12 in 2010) which held consultations with 4,000 union members. Of these, 105 led to court cases and the union side was clearly unsuccessful in only 13 (ČMKOS 2010b: 36-37). Individual unions often claim a substantially higher success rate.

3.4 Dialogue at the national level

Social dialogue at the national level took shape with the tripartite *Rada hospodářské a sociální dohody* (RHSD, Council for Economic and Social Accord) formed at the Czechoslovak, Czech and Slovak levels in October 1990. The firmest support before that came from the new union leaders, partly following examples and advice from some western European countries and partly motivated by concern that they were not being consulted on important new laws before they were discussed in parliament, notably the law setting conditions for trade union registration. The reaction from the government at the time was positive, although some on the political right never saw the point of encouraging interest representation. The break-up of Czechoslovakia made no substantial difference, tripartism continuing through the Czech and Slovak bodies.

The RHSD brought together seven representatives each from the employers, the government and the unions. The employers' organisations were at first rudimentary, but clearly benefited as this structure gave them recognition and a voice. Unions were represented by six from ČSKOS, and one from the *Konfederace umění a kultury* (KUK, Confederation of Art and Culture), a smaller confederation discussed below. The body was defined as 'an agreement-seeking and initiative-taking organ' concerned with economic and social issues. In practice, it evolved into a body that allowed consultation over government policies and legislation. It never became an arena for collective bargaining between unions and employers.

The first major success was an agreement on changes to labour law, as outlined above. It also provided the framework for a General Agreement, in which the government made commitments on social policy and on limiting the fall in real incomes during the early years of the transition to a market economy which started with liberalisation of prices and imports and strict monetary and wage controls in January 1991. However, any thoughts of some kind of grand social pact were short-lived. Problems emerged very quickly as prices rose by 56 per cent and recorded real wages fell by 26 per cent in 1991, a much worse result than the government had promised. A crucial event was the refusal of the government on 18 July 1991 to increase the minimum wage in line with an agreement on indexation. It had been set at 60 per cent of the average industrial wage but, with all wages falling in real terms, the government argued that indexation would lead to an unacceptably high relative level. Unions tried to protest, but were not united – some actually saw a minimum wage as a threat to differentials for skilled employees – and lacked public support. The message was clear. Governments were not bound by agreements reached in

the RHSD. Ministers spoke of it as an advisory organ ‘where the government finds out the opinions of its social partners’.¹⁹

Governments in the following years avoided making definite commitments. Subsequent General Agreements became increasingly general and the last one was signed in 1994. The dominant right-wing party in the coalition government had little interest in social dialogue and Prime Minister Klaus hoped for ‘a new kind of tripartism’²⁰ which would become a forum for discussions between unions and employers, with the government fading into the background. There was even an interlude from June 1995 to November 1997 when the government restricted the tripartite body’s scope, excluding economic issues, and downgraded its role to that of ‘dialogue’, implying no pressure to reach agreement. The background to this is explained in the next section. The trade union side also lost interest in General Agreements. ČMKOS declined requests from the newly-elected Social Democrat government in 1998 to negotiate a new one: it saw no point when parliament could easily ignore or overrule any agreements reached between unions, government and employers. Nevertheless, tripartism was always valued for providing direct contact to government and as a basis for consultations over policy and legislation. The key point was that participants were guaranteed the right under law to be consulted on relevant social, employment and economic legislation prior to its discussion by parliament. Their input was facilitated by a substantial structure that took firm shape at the end of the 1990s with ten working groups covering such themes as economic policy, education, health and safety and the European Union.

3.5 Expanding political influence

ČMKOS learned how to use the RHSD as a starting point for lobbying among Members of Parliament (MPs), backing pressure with mass protests. It established an advisory ‘Legislative Council’, made up of 25 lawyers from member unions, to assess and comment on proposed legislation. As an indication of its level of activity, it handled 323 pieces of legislation in 2007, preparing comments and responses where appropriate. This put the union centre in a uniquely powerful position within civil society, able to draw on expertise over a wide range of policy areas to influence laws. Governments dominated by the Social Democrats – from 1998 to 2004 – were more likely to listen than right-wing-dominated coalitions, but all governments from 1996 were dependent on very narrow majorities and that meant that influencing a few MPs to take a pro-union position was sufficient to change the outcome of a parliamentary vote. This proved important in some of the very close votes on details of state budgets that affected pay in the public sector.

The confederation’s political influence, and social dialogue at the national level, was important to unions and basic organisations as a means of influencing

¹⁹. P. Miller, *Rudé právo*, 16 August 1991.

²⁰. *Hospodářské noviny*, 23 June 1993.

any amendments to labour law and trade union rights. This was an ongoing theme, partly because of new circumstances, such as the scope for new forms of flexible working, partly because of changes required by accession to the EU and partly because some employers and a strong body of right-wing politicians kept coming back with proposals for more radical liberalisation. Their proposals ranged from complete elimination of the Labour Code as such, through effective elimination of sectoral agreements, to weakening trade union powers on health and safety and allowing dismissal of an employee without giving cause.

Individual unions also used the RHSD to press their own demands. Unions representing employees dependent on the state budget had the greatest need for political influence and created a formal coalition to press demands, particularly on pay, several times also staging short protest strikes. For many others, national-level dialogue was important for sector-specific issues. There were important cases affecting drivers in both road and rail transport. These could not be resolved by negotiation with employers alone, partly because the law could take precedence over a collective agreement and, in the case of road transport, because not all employers were signatories of the sectoral agreements. Almost every union had some reason for at least occasional political influence. This ranged from shop opening hours to the legal status of libraries, research institutes and the fire service. All of these affected employment conditions in ways, and to an extent, that collective bargaining with employers could not. Individual unions also developed their own channels for dialogue with government, including contacts with MPs and ministries. Success with the latter depended on the individual minister and was generally easier with Social Democrats than with parties of the right. EU accession and the emphasis on 'social dialogue', coinciding with Social Democrat-dominated governments, helped to embed such consultations in more formal structures, such as advisory councils within ministries. These then continued under the subsequent right-wing coalition government.

In other respects, too, EU accession slightly altered the position of trade unions and protection for employees. From 1990, EU conditions could be quoted by the union side as a justification for maintaining substantial employee protection: this was an important factor in winning political allies. Accession conditions were important for a number of improvements to employee protection, for example in maintaining agreed conditions after a change of owner. The most contentious case was an anti-discrimination law which was finally passed in 2009, albeit against strong opposition from right-wing politicians who conceded only because the EU would otherwise have imposed a substantial financial sanction. Rights to consultation and information were already present in Czech law and there were elected employee representatives on company supervisory boards, whose powers were generally similar to those of the German equivalent. These were usually union representatives. Provision was also made in a law that came into force in 2001 for Employee Councils in enterprises where employees lacked trade union representation, but they played no significant role. They are covered in the following section. However, a significant gain was the creation of European Works Councils in multinational

companies, providing joint representation for Czech unions alongside colleagues from other countries within the same company. These became common from 2006, but Czech unions often had observer status even before EU accession. This provided basic organisations with contacts and access to information that could be used in negotiations with local managements. EWCs became one of the main channels for learning of cases where local managements were trying to impose tougher conditions than were normal in Western Europe.

4. The labour movement in general

This section covers the Czech trade union centres, depicting their differences and how they evolved in the two decades after 1990. The situation is summarised in Table 1. ČMKOS was the dominant centre throughout, joined at the start by KUK and later by ASO. No other serious centre emerged. Two pseudo-centres were supported by political parties, but failed to gain any significant affiliates. They are covered briefly at the end of the section. The main focus is on ČMKOS, its orientation and evolution. KUK and ASO are then covered to demonstrate how far they differed from the biggest centre. The following section, covering the structure of individual unions, provides more information on the kinds of unions that dominated within these centres.

The development of all these centres was strongly influenced by previous history. A major effect of state socialism was to separate the trade union movement from traditions of a labour movement. The idea of a united movement and a strong centre was linked in the public mind to the imposed centralisation of the past. This was a particularly sensitive issue for unions, as they were portrayed by their opponents as being part of that past. All of this created pressure for decentralisation of the union movement, maximising autonomy for the lowest levels, without any links to political parties. Nevertheless, two new union centres emerged in 1990 that were intended at least to coordinate the activities of emerging sectoral unions. The biggest was ČSKOS, within which ČMKOS was established. After the break-up of Czechoslovakia, the Czechoslovak confederation soon formally wound itself up, giving way to the separate Czech and Slovak organisations.

Table 1 The main Czech trade union centres and their recognition at national level

Union centre	Type	Political affiliation	Recognition in RHSD
ASO (1995)	Confederation, no central apparatus	None, differing preferences among unions	Since 2000
ČMKOS (1990) (within ČSKOS up to 1992)	Confederation with significant central apparatus	None, closest to Social Democrats	Since 1990
KUK (1990)	Confederation, no central apparatus	None	1990–2000

4.1 Developing a union strategy

The initial thinking on the role and nature of unions in the new environment came from the emerging ČSKOS leadership and discussions in the union weekly *Sondy odborových svazů* (cf. Myant 1993). The aim was laid down as protecting the interests of employees and of others – such as the unemployed and pensioners – in a socially weak position. The inspiration was the European social model, meaning influential unions, protection of employees at work and substantial welfare provision. The ČSKOS position was expressed

in its first programmatic statement, *Tržní společnost ano, ale sociální*²¹ ('A Market Society, Yes, but a Social Market Society'). This was to be achieved by dialogue and agreement, without 'grandiose gestures and empty phrases'. International contacts were sought from the start and ČSKOS was accepted into the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions in May 1990 and gained full membership of the European Trade Union Confederation in 1995. This was important both because international recognition raised the status and legitimacy of trade unions within Czechoslovakia and because international contacts brought help and advice on the role of a trade union centre in a democratic society. One effect was to temper the enthusiasm for decentralisation, confirming to doubters that there was a place for a central body, for decision-making congresses and for trying to influence political decisions.

Nevertheless, there was a firm conviction, vocally opposed only by some voices from the miners' union (Myant 1993: 76–77), that the new union movement should avoid any commitment to a particular party. That was partly a reaction to the role of unions under state socialism when they had followed the political line of the ruling party. It was also partly a pragmatic necessity. Parties were slow to take definite shape and as they did, union members, covering at the start almost the whole working population, spread their support across the full political spectrum. A rare survey among textile workers showed only 9 per cent viewing themselves as on the left and support for parties was biased, if anything, towards the right: 84 per cent were convinced of the need for radical economic reform.²² Even much later, there were frequent complaints from within ČMKOS unions at the perceived closeness of the links between leading officials and the Social Democrats. In the early years, there was a steadfast determination not to become involved in important debates on economic transformation or to take a stand on such a major issue as the break-up of Czechoslovakia. Things began to shift as the government seemed to be preparing 'a frontal attack on trade unions',²³ including restrictions on sectoral agreements and banning unions in state administration.

The change was clear by 1994 when the right-wing coalition was looking to reform pensions, reducing their value and raising the retirement age. ČMKOS opposed this and demanded full indexation of pensions. The first port of call was the RHSD, but the government did not waver in its plans. The next stages, in March 1994, were a petition delivered to parliament with 629,950 signatures and a public demonstration, according to ČMKOS with 40,000 participants, backing the union position on pensions and opposing proposed changes to labour law. In December 1994, ČMKOS called a 15-minute warning strike to back its position on pensions: it claimed some form of participation from 1.45 million employees, almost one-third of the working population. A further demonstration in March 1995 showed general opposition to government plans for social reform. The scale of these protests suggests that the union centre had considerable public backing. It is more difficult to assess how far

21. *Práce*, 27 September 1990.

22. *Práce*, 26 March 1992.

23. *Práce*, 2 April 1993.

they influenced policy decisions. Success was greatest over labour law, partly because employers, or at least a large part of them, did not share the right-wing politicians' agenda. They were gaining from representation through the RHSD and had nothing to gain from conflict with, or the elimination of, trade unions. The fate of the pension reform depended on a vote in parliament and the government narrowly won. Nevertheless, the trade union voice was loud enough to give fair warning that further reforms would be difficult. The next likely changes were to be in the health system, with various market-oriented alternatives under consideration to replace the universal, public-insurance-based system introduced shortly beforehand. The likelihood of opposition from trade unions was probably one factor holding back such market-oriented reform in welfare services.

4.2 ČMKOS and the Social Democrats

Opposition to some policies of the right-wing government of the time brought ČMKOS closer to the rising Social Democrat party. Opponents of ČMKOS, including unions not affiliated with it and political parties on the right, have been keen to portray the union confederation as effectively tied to that party. They have been close in two respects: in the general thinking on economic and social policy, where both share a commitment to a European social model, and in a few leading individuals. The most important cases have been Richard Falbr and Milan Štěch. The former was ČMKOS chair from 1994 to 2002 and a member of the Czech senate from its formation in 1996 to 2004 and of the European Parliament from 2004, both times supported by the Social Democrats. Štěch was ČMKOS chair from 2002 to 2010 and a senator for the Social Democrats from 1996. There are also active party members among other leading union officials, but alongside them are many without party affiliation. Moreover, there are no political parties active within the unions and no union involvement in any party's structures.

ČMKOS has not declared itself for any particular party at any election. However, it has produced analyses of party programmes and the voting results of MPs on issues of concern to unions. For the 2006 elections, manifestos were analysed around the themes of concern with collective bargaining, attitudes towards trade unions, wage policy, employment law and proposals for solving unemployment problems. This was then left for individual unions and individual union members to interpret as they saw fit. It was very clear – and other ČMKOS analyses point in the same direction – that the parties on the left, the Social Democrats and the Communists, were closest to the ČMKOS positions. There is also often some common ground with the Christian Democrats, but much less with parties to their right.

There have been a few cases of conflict between ČMKOS and Social-Democrat-dominated governments. The most important was over proposals for fiscal reform in 2002–2003 which were stimulated by the requirement to reduce a budget deficit, following criticism from the European Commission. The government proposal included welfare-spending cuts and increases in indirect

taxes. ČMKOS argued for tax increases imposed largely on the highest earners. They backed their demand with a public demonstration on 13 September 2003, also supported by ASO and reportedly attended by 20,000 trade unionists. This failed to shift the government's position.

A less important conflict, but nevertheless one that demonstrated the differences between the two organisations, was over a labour law amendment providing for the formation of Employee Councils. This was supported by some small employers and was also intended to bring the country into line with a common practice in EU member states. Czech unions opposed a measure they thought would dilute their exclusive position as employee representatives. The law that came into force in January 2001 was a compromise that ČMKOS could accept. It stipulated that councils could be formed (but do not have to be) in a workplace with more than 25 employees where no union organisation exists. This was later amended to allow their formation even where a union organisation does exist. The council then has the right to some information, but not to collective bargaining, joint decision-making or protection from victimisation. The Employee Council, unlike a union organisation, is not a legal entity and does not have to register. Occasional reports from union sources refer to councils converting into union organisations, but there is no other public evidence of their existence.

4.3 Alternative union centres

Although ČMKOS is the largest and most effective union centre, a number of others have also tried to gain influence. The first was KUK, which took shape in early 1990. It started with the enthusiasm of the revolution and the belief that the cultural sphere would have a special role to play. Rejection of the symbolism of the past was even stronger than with ČSKOS and the old union of cultural workers split into at least 20 distinct unions, many of them linking particular professions rather than workplaces. Its members took over the property of the old union and it took a seat on the RHSD, giving it direct access to government. This was justified by membership claims of around 175,000, but there were no precise records – the affiliation fee was a flat sum with no requirement to report membership levels – and numbers undoubtedly fell rapidly.

As a union centre, KUK failed. Its membership was very diverse, including independent professionals, professionals who were effectively in an employment relationship (such as musicians and actors), professionals who were in standard employment relationships (such as librarians and museum employees) and some manual workers. It lacked any coherent philosophy for its role and drifted towards speaking only for self-employed professionals when negotiating in the RHSD. A number of member unions left during the 1990s, in several cases later joining ČMKOS. KUK as such continued to exist but with minimal public profile and largely only to serve the business interests of some self-employed professionals. With membership well below the 150,000 required for participation in the RHSD, KUK dropped out in 2000.

KUK's place was taken by ASO. This confederation may never have had the required numbers and membership undoubtedly declined in later years. Nevertheless, RHSD statutes were always treated as guidelines rather than a rigid legal requirement and ASO's position was never challenged. ASO was a very different kind of union centre to ČMKOS. It charged only a nominal affiliation fee – some ČMKOS unions were paying half their incomes to the confederation – had no paid officials, relying on affiliated unions to provide expertise when necessary, and was not affiliated to any international organisation. Indeed, many of its affiliated unions used ČMKOS expertise and publications, reproducing them on their websites. Links between the leaderships of the two union centres have been very limited, but they present a broadly united front on issues of employment law. There is less common ground on economic policy, with some ASO-affiliated unions likely to agree with the low-tax, low-spending agenda of right-wing parties. It has joined, or jointly sponsored, some ČMKOS protest actions, but places an even stronger emphasis on keeping out of party-political issues. The diverse nature of its affiliated unions, and the nature of their disagreements with ČMKOS, are covered in the next section.

There are also two smaller pseudo-centres. The *Křesťanská odborová koalice* (KOK, Christian Trade Union Coalition) claims to be unable to cooperate with ČMKOS because of that confederation's alleged 'violation of the principles of standing outside politics and its close links to the Social Democratic Party' (<http://www.krestanskeodbory.cz>). KOK operates with no full-time officials and is based at Christian Democrat party headquarters. A claimed membership of 8,000, including individual members and pensioners, cannot be verified. It has at least one affiliated organisation that has negotiated on behalf of some employees in public transport in Brno, the second largest city in the Czech Republic, and has also had a small presence in schools. The *Odborové sdružení Čech, Moravy, Slezska* (OSČMS, Trade Union Association of Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia), claims to be 'independent of political parties' (<http://oscms.sweb.cz>). Its President in 2010 was the prominent Communist MP Stanislav Grospič, who reported that there were 12,000 members of the association (Central Committee resolution of October 2009, www.kscm.cz). However, he clearly saw the party's priority as developing links to ČMKOS rather than fostering this small organisation. The OSČMS web site gives no information on organisational strength or collective bargaining activities, referring mainly to offers for legal services, recreation and travel. It does have, according to other unions, organisations that sign collective agreements, but they follow the lead of larger organisations.

5. Union structure

Union structures are best followed by affiliation to a confederation. Table 2 sets out the domains of the three centres that have been important, plus the position of significant unions that remain independent of any centre. The dominance of ČMKOS is clear. It alone covers almost all parts of the economy. Other centres and independent unions are influential only in some very particular segments. As indicated in this section, their presence was often a matter of chance circumstances and personal preferences. In the case of KUK there was an intention to keep within a particular domain, but this centre soon failed as a representative body and came to play no significant role. It is noteworthy that there are few cases of competition between union centres within a sector. The most important areas of competition, between centres and between unions affiliated to centres and independent unions, are found in transport, for reasons indicated below.

Table 2 The main Czech trade union centres and their domains

Union centre	Private sector, production industries	Private sector, services	Public sector
ASO	<i>Agriculture, food</i>	Retail, finance	Health, power, road transport, railways
ČMKOS	<i>All branches, of mining, manufacturing and construction, except agriculture, print and glass</i>	<i>Retail, finance, catering, hotels, culture and recreation (from late 1990s)</i>	<i>State administration, education, health, road and air transport, power generation, railways</i>
KUK		<i>Culture and recreation (to late 1990s) (continuing with self-employed in media)</i>	
Independent unions	<i>Glass, print, food</i>		Road and air transport, railways

Note: Italics indicate a dominant position, while normal type indicates a subsidiary position.

5.1 ČMKOS-affiliated unions

ČMKOS unions vary in size, from the biggest, with 156,748 members in 2010, down to the smallest, with 274 members. They mostly follow a similar organisational structure, which reflects their origins. Most are built from basic organisations that take 70–80 per cent of the membership dues and represent all grades of employees, often excluding only those in management who are actively involved in negotiating pay and setting employment conditions. Unions are often confined to a single sector, although sometimes covering closely related sectors. They hardly ever compete with each other in the same workplace, although they may include a few organisations that could fall within another union's remit. This helps to remind union leaders of the possibility open to basic organisations to find a home in another union if they feel themselves badly treated. There is occasionally competition from independent unions, especially in transport, but the ČMKOS union is usually the clear leader in negotiations with employers.

Contact with members is largely dependent on basic organisations. Few unions even have a central list of members and none can contact individual members directly. Bigger unions have been building lists of e-mail addresses and mobile phone numbers of activists, but going beyond that tends to be resisted by officials in basic organisations, who jealously guard their autonomy, and is hampered by the disorganised state of some of these organisations. Most unions have a website, but the impact varies, depending on the kind of membership. Much of the material displayed comes from ČMKOS.

Very few unions undertake any kind of press monitoring or make serious efforts to influence the media. The confederation inherited a daily paper and publishing house, but these were sold off in 1995 and cost-cutting at the centre later reduced its resources to a weekly journal, with hardly any distribution outside the union movement, and a single press spokesperson. Not surprisingly, unions frequently complain that press coverage is generally minimal and, such as there is, typically negative. Larger unions generally produce a journal, with the quality clearly dependent on the union's size and resources, but many have dropped the practice, noting that copies often lay undistributed in basic organisations. Thus, again, information to members, and to non-members too, largely flows through union structures and is dependent on local officials.

ČMKOS unions frequently retain a significant pensioner membership, ranging up to over 25 per cent of the total. Pensioners are organised, like other members, into basic organisations and stay with the union largely for social activities. ČMKOS established a central body for pensioners in June 1992, with representatives from all affiliated unions. Although formally only an advisory organ, the *Asociace důchodců odborářů* (Association of Pensioner Trade Unionists) plays a substantial representative role. It has direct access to the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and has argued consistently on themes such as the importance of automatic full indexation for pensions. It does not have direct membership and not all unions record pensioner members separately. The exact pensioner membership of ČMKOS-affiliated unions can therefore only be estimated at about 20 per cent of the total. The equivalent for young people (*Rada mladých*, Council of Young [Trade Unionist]) does not have an equivalent profile outside the unions, lacks representation from all affiliated unions and sees its role largely as battling to ensure that unions pay attention to the needs of young people. The *Výbor ČMKOS pro rovné příležitosti žen a mužů* (Committee for Equal Opportunities for Women and Men) similarly does not have active support from all affiliated unions. It is active outside the union movement and is involved in consultations over government policies, but much of its work is seen as persuading unions to take the issue of equal opportunities seriously.

Most ČMKOS unions still have wealth inherited from the old unions, but the amount varies widely. The management and fate of that wealth has periodically caused controversy and conflict, leading to its characterisation as 'a destabilising factor'²⁴ or as the unions' 'Achilles heel' (ČMKOS 2010a: 83). The most

24. *Sondy* 1998, No. 1, p. 5.

lucrative part, including some prominent hotels, was put into a joint-stock company in March 1994, with 35 unions as shareholders. A number of unions then broke a previous undertaking and unilaterally sold their shares. The union movement as a whole had lost majority control by late 1997. Others sold their remaining shares in 2002. A number of unions, either as a result of those changes or because of poor management of their own affairs, have been left with nothing. Others have retained enough to be able to finance their activities without requiring contributions from basic organisations. Affiliation fees to ČMKOS are a significant burden on the poorer unions, but it brings in return a number of identifiable benefits.

ČMKOS is valued for its expertise on economic, social and employment policy, for its political influence and for advice and services it can provide, ranging from legal help to IT services. Identification with the mainstream of the trade union movement, able to communicate via the RHSD with the highest levels of government, is also frequently referred to, especially by smaller and weaker unions, as a major source of their standing in the eyes of the government and employers. ČMKOS unions, apart from the smallest, are also typically affiliated to an international, or at least a European confederation. Such links were sought from 1990 as a stamp of international recognition that could improve their domestic prestige. This was also often associated with advice and training on collective bargaining practices. That was becoming less important by the mid and later 1990s and some Czech unions have been playing a role as advisors to unions in South-Eastern Europe. In a number of cases they see European representation as essential where the EU sets standards, for example in transport and parts of manufacturing, and they see contacts with western European unions as crucial for providing the information required to negotiate with multinational companies.

The largest affiliated union is KOVO, representing steel, engineering and electronics. It has the largest voice in ČMKOS, sometimes to the annoyance of other unions, but also has the least need for the confederation's services in view of its own expertise and network of regional offices. KOVO faces some competition from independent unions, but attempts to establish organisations representing particular industrial branches or grades of employee have had limited success. The former threat was handled by creating sections within the union. The latter was never serious as higher-level employees generally drifted away from all unions.

Some ČMKOS unions are very small, sometimes with no full-time employees. This greatly limits their ability to undertake independent activities and makes it difficult to maintain a serious public profile or even to keep in regular contact with individual members. For them, affiliation to the confederation is doubly important. Eight of the 32 affiliated unions still did not have their own web sites in 2010 and for some participation in ČMKOS protest actions is at the token level. Among these smaller unions are six that came to ČMKOS from previous membership in KUK and several of these differ from the ČMKOS norm by representing clearly-defined professional groups, such as actors and musicians.

ČMKOS affiliates include unions in private sector industry and transport, in market services and in the public sector, including health, education, state administration, the police and the fire service. Most of these face competing unions. The case of transport is discussed in more detail below. In the health sector, the alternatives have been organisations representing particular professions, unlike the *Odborový svaz zdravotnictví a sociální péče v České republice* (OSZSPČR, Trade Union of the Health Service and Social Care of the Czech Republic) which brings together all grades and occupations within the sector. The schools union was challenged in the 1990s by a union representing manual workers in the sector and subsequently by some rival teachers' organisations, including one independent union that was vocal in 2003 in arguing for more vigorous and concerted strike action. The schools union has responded to the threat of fragmentation along occupational lines by creating sections that should give visible representation to the diverse interests within its ranks. Almost all unions affiliated to ČMKOS sign collective agreements with employers, but most have no experience of strikes apart from participation in the ČMKOS protest actions referred to above, which involved at the most very short work stoppages.

These and all other significant protest actions are included in the list of events in Annex 1. Even in coal mines the only sustained strikes have been underground protests by relatively small groups of miners, several times without union backing. KOVO produced an analysis of protest actions by its basic organisations from 1997 to 2004 (www.oskovo.cz/cinnost/akce.htm, accessed 1 May 2006), showing participation in national ČMKOS actions and workplace demonstrations against non-payment of wages, redundancies and factory closures, including eight very short strikes and three that lasted slightly longer. The most significant were a short work stoppage in the Škoda car manufacturer in 2005 and a further strike in 2007 that lasted for one day before an agreement was reached. In both cases the issue was pay. Neither case, despite some union rhetoric about taking forward the lessons of 'the strike victory',²⁵ sparked off further strikes in other industrial enterprises. There have been strikes over pay in public services, called by the unions representing employees in schools, health care and in state administration. These have largely been short protests aimed at influencing public opinion and politicians. The schools union in particular has claimed substantial participation, but that often includes forms of activity short of a strike. The underlying source of militancy is a perception that teachers' pay is below that for similarly qualified employees elsewhere, leading to a situation in which a significant minority of teachers are not formally qualified for the jobs they are performing. Governments periodically respond to pressures to raise relative pay levels in the public sector and then allow them to slip back.

5.2 Mergers among ČMKOS-affiliated unions

Much in the structure of ČMKOS unions appears irrational, as is true in many countries. It also appears ultimately unsustainable if unions continue to de-

25. S. Tomášek, *Kováč*, 22 April 2005.

cline in size. There would seem to be obvious benefits in moving to a structure based on a smaller number of unions, bringing together similar occupations and able to provide a higher level of activity, including better communication with members and with the wider public. ČMKOS is in no position to impose any such reorganisation on its members, but leaders of bigger unions have periodically spoken of an ideal structure based on a small number of larger unions (cf. Myant and Smith 1999: 280). There were a few mergers in the early 1990s, and frequent negotiations in the following years, but only one successful merger of any significance after 1994, leading to the creation of the ECHO union in 2004 (the name was always in capital letters, although not an acronym). This organisational inertia arguably leads to a weaker union movement. It reflected, as indicated below, some particular aspects of Czech union history that made merger negotiations especially difficult and mergers appear unattractive or unnecessary to some unions.

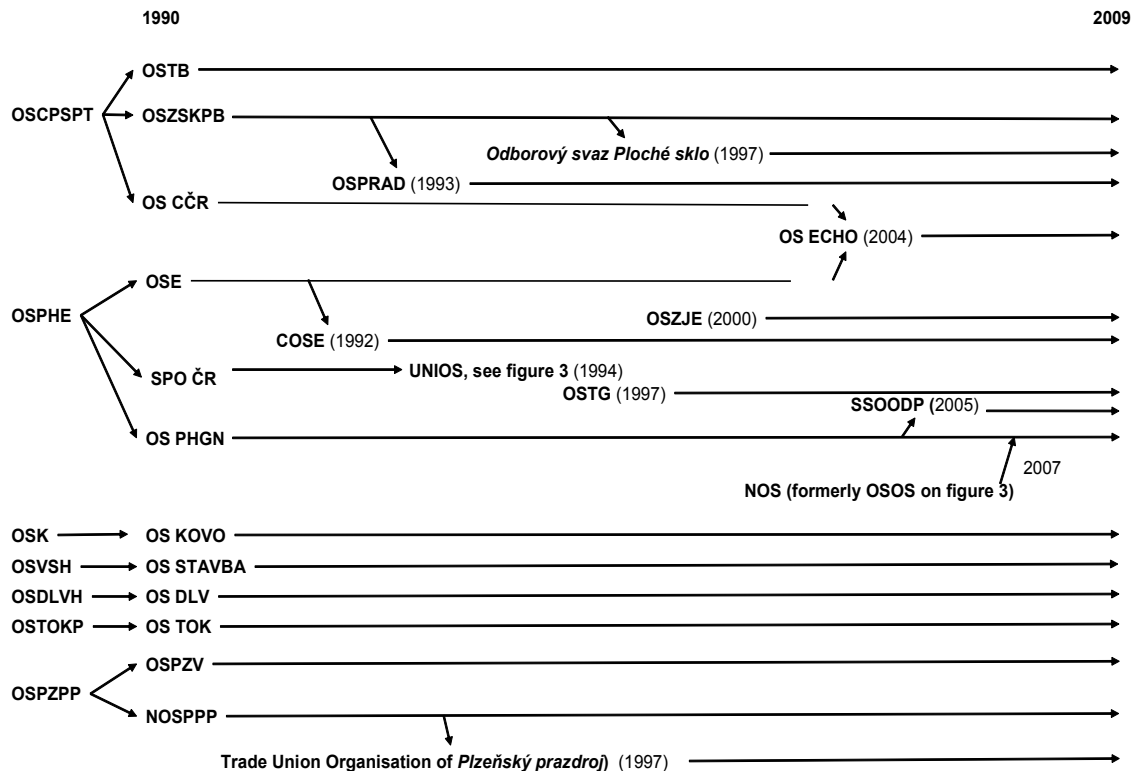
Figure 1 shows the changing structure of a group of unions that emerged in 1990 either by continuation of, or by subdivision from, unions that had existed in the state socialist period. The group here spans manufacturing and extractive industries plus agriculture. Of these, KOVO and STAVBA both looked back to very long traditions, tracing their origins to some of the first Czech unions from the 1860s and this may have helped them to limit fragmentation. They lost some basic organisations and gained some from other unions in the years after 1990, but suffered no serious subdivision. Nor, despite repeated efforts, were they able to persuade other unions to join them in mergers which, as the other parties frequently objected, would have looked more like a takeover. Unions related to the energy and chemical industries followed more complex trajectories, with subdivision as likely as merger. A breakaway is recorded as such only when one or more basic organisations left an existing union to form a new one. Where this has not clearly the case, the new union is recorded as starting from scratch.

Many reasons are given by leading union officials for the failure of merger negotiations. One is the reluctance of officials at the top – generally of the other union in merger negotiations – to give up prestigious positions and their ability to arouse fears and suspicions among ordinary members. Another is the suspicion and opposition of officials in basic organisations. Both of these factors clearly have been important, but they do not provide a full explanation. Practical difficulties are often cited, such as the need to harmonise structures and rules, and the different shares taken by basic organisations. Even if these could be resolved there have also been good reasons for maintaining a distinct, small union representing a particular sector or occupational group. It was often been argued that an independent member of ČMKOS has a voice and status which could easily be lost as a small part of a larger union.

Above all, a major reason cited by leading officials for rejecting merger proposals is that the union did not face ‘a threat to its existence’. The point was often made that income from property made life reasonably comfortable, and this was quite likely for unions with rapidly declining membership as their original allocation of property had been based on membership in 1990. Property could also arouse animosity when one union appeared to be richer than

its potential partner: reluctance to share wealth with another union could be enough to end the discussions. Thus a union facing serious financial difficulties and desperate for salvation from a richer partner was likely to be shunned.

Figure 1 Changing union structure in energy, agriculture and manufacturing



Note: NOS = *Nezávislé odborové sdružení* (Independent Trade Union Association); OS CČR = *Odborový svaz chemie ČR* (Trade Union of Workers in the Chemical Industry); OSCPSPT = *Odborový svaz chemického, papírenského a sklářského průmyslu a tisku* (Trade Union of Workers in the Chemical, Paper, Glass and Print Industries); OSDLVH = *Odborový svaz dřevoprůmyslu, lesního a vodního hospodářství* (Trade Union of Workers in the Woodworking, Forestry and Water Industries); OSE = *Odborový svaz energetiků* (Trade Union of Workers in Power Generation); OSK = *Odborový svaz kovoprůmyslu* (Trade Union of Workers in the Metal Industry); OSPHE = *Odborový svaz pracovníků hornictví a energetiky* (Trade Union of Workers in Mining and Electricity Generation); OSPZPP = *Odborový svaz pracovníků zemědělství a potravinářského průmyslu* (Trade Union of the Workers in Agriculture and the Food Industry); OSTOKP = *Odborový svaz textilního, oděvního a kožedělního průmyslu* (Trade Union of Workers in the Textile, Garment and Leather Industries); OSVSH *Odborový svaz Stavebnictví a ve výrobě stavebních hmot* (Trade Union of Workers in Construction and the Production of Construction Materials).

The merger in 2004 between chemical and electricity workers (covering generation and distribution), forming the new union ECHO, was able to overcome these obstacles because their memberships, levels of wealth and structures were similar and some key top officials were ready to retire. The result was a rationalisation of union organisation and a reduction in staffing levels. However, as indicated in Figure 1, the history of these branches since 1990 is more one of sub-division and of new unions emerging than of mergers.

An expansion of the miners' union, involving the takeover of the *Nezávislé odborové sdružení* (NOS, Independent Trade Union Association, until 2006

Odborový svaz občanských sdružení, OSOS, Union of Civic Associations), a 1,300-strong, financially-troubled union representing some diverse and scattered services, was a slightly different case. The basis this time was the miners' desire for expansion based on the straightforward idea that all union work was very similar, requiring knowledge of labour law and collective bargaining on wages with managements. Moreover, the miners' union made itself attractive by using its substantial inherited wealth to charge only nominal dues to members. However, the miners themselves suffered some fragmentation with the loss of about 4,000 members who set up a separate union for miners in one North Bohemian company in 2005. The rationale there was the hope of merging with the union representing electricity workers that fell under the same employer. That failed. The electricity workers remained affiliated to ASO, while the new miners' union remained in ČMKOS. Thus the net effect of changes in the miners' union could be seen, on balance, as an increase in union fragmentation.

5.3 ASO and its diverse membership

Membership of ASO is extremely heterogeneous, reflecting the diverse origins of its members. The starting point was the union representing agricultural workers (*Odborový svaz pracovníků zemědělství a výživy*, OSPZV, Trade Union of Workers in Agriculture and Food). It threatened to pull out of ČSKOS if the confederation's leading officials 'meddled in politics'²⁶ and was reportedly not even paying affiliation fees in 1992. It left ČMKOS in 1995, avoiding association with the confederation's continuing disagreements with the then right-wing dominated coalition. It still claimed 'almost 100,000 members' in 2010 (www.ospzv-aso.cz, accessed 6 May 2010), but this is unlikely in view of declining employment in the sector, the general decline in union membership and its own level of public activities. Nevertheless, it had 20 full-time employees and continued to sign collective agreements in agriculture and with some retail chains. It was joined in ASO by *Český odborový svaz energetiků* (Czech Union of Power Station Workers) and *Jednotný svaz soukromých zaměstnanců* (United Union of Private Employees) which was a union claiming very diverse membership, but providing no details. It did not charge membership dues and did not negotiate with employers. A number of smaller unions joined in the following years, but many also left quickly or sank into inactivity. Of 13 members listed in 2010, only six had accessible websites that carried any recent information.

A small number of affiliated unions were important, especially *Odborové sdružení železničářů* (Railway Workers' Union, OSŽ), which transferred from ČMKOS in 1998. That followed personal differences and complaints over the handling of union property. It also reflected a major difference over trade union strategy. The railway workers staged a week-long strike in February 1997, by far the largest and most important case of sustained industrial action in

26. R. Falbr, *Hospodářské noviny*, 12 August 1992.

the Czech Republic's short history. It ended with what was effectively government capitulation to demands relating to the management's behaviour and its restructuring plans. Other unions offered support, particularly when attempts were made to declare the strike illegal, but the railway workers' leadership felt they deserved even more and that they had demonstrated the power they could exercise alone. Later that year, when ČMKOS held a major demonstration against the government's policies, railway workers were among a minority within ČMKOS, also including miners, construction workers and schools, arguing in favour of escalating the protests into a general strike. In the event, the government resigned shortly afterwards and fresh elections led to the minority Social Democrat government.

In structural terms, OSŽ is similar to the larger ČMKOS unions, representing all grades of employees within one branch of industry. It also has similar needs for international affiliations and domestic political influence and finds it easier talking to parties on the left. Its leaders cite several reasons for keeping outside ČMKOS, but the essential point is that ASO gives them access to the RHSD whenever they need it and without any pressure to adhere to a common position for the whole confederation. Nevertheless, despite its strength, and continuing financial wealth, the OSŽ has not been a centre for mergers of other unions in transport and has itself suffered some breakaways, as indicated below in discussion of the special position of transport unions.

Another important ASO union is the *Lékařský odborový klub – Svaz českých lékařů* (LOK, Medical Doctors Trade Union Club – Union of Czech Doctors), founded in March 1995, which made headlines in November of that year as groups of doctors threatened, and took, strike action around demands for pay to match western European levels. They later joined coordinated protest actions, short of strikes, with the ČMKOS health union. LOK is an explicitly profession-based body, differing from the ČMKOS-affiliated health union which covers all grades of health workers. It has a high political profile, comments on health-policy issues and is listened to in the Ministry of Health. The central figure at its initiation, David Rath, subsequently moved from the right of the political spectrum to become Minister of Health in the Social Democrat-dominated government in 2005–2006. Other ASO-affiliated unions are very diverse. Some are based in single workplaces, some represent particular professional groups and one links unrelated occupations in part of North Moravia, including police and chemical production. They benefit from confederation membership by having the status associated with the RHSD and this is achieved at effectively zero cost. They obtain no other services or benefits and have no further obligations associated with membership.

5.4 The special case of transport unions

Union organisation in transport represents an extreme case of fragmentation. Somewhat paradoxically, this followed in part from the relatively comfortable conditions for union activity and – by Czech standards – high levels of militancy. Eight unions signed the collective agreement for railways in 2010.

These included the OSŽ, by far the biggest union, six unions representing particular occupational groups and the *Svaz odborářů služeb a dopravy* (SOSaD, Union of Services and Transport) which had recently broken away from the OSŽ, following conflicts in that union's leadership, and affiliated to ČMKOS. Railways suffered less from reorganisation, changes in ownership and aggressive management than industry or market services. This may have made it easier for occupational groups to think first of their own, sectional interests. There was less need to be concerned with a common threat to all railway employees. It was also possible for quite small unions to survive with minimal full-time employees and needing only a link to legal advice. Then, within the terms of collective bargaining law, they could refuse to sign an agreement until their specific demands were met. An independent union was therefore a very effective means of pressing sectional interests.

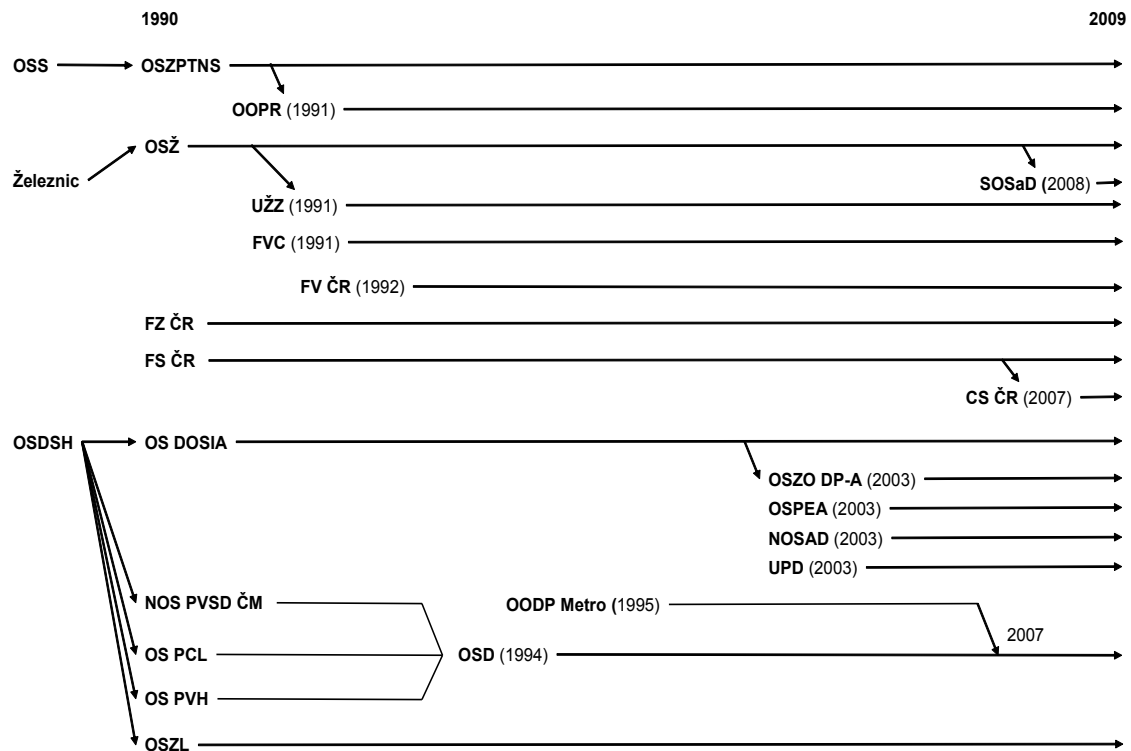
This was demonstrated most emphatically by the *Federace strojvůdců České republiky* (FS ČR, Federation of Locomotive Drivers of the Czech Republic), representing the overwhelming majority of that occupation, which was independent from its foundation in May 1990. It was a union with international links – joining the Autonomous Train Drivers' Unions of Europe, a body uniting unions from 16 European countries that tries to influence EU transport policy – and some industrial muscle, demonstrated as early as November 1991 by a one-hour strike calling for a solution to the railways' financial problems at the time. Its power was demonstrated in 2005 when it refused for six months to sign the collective agreement with the railway employers, pressing for a pay increase above that of other unions. Under collective bargaining law at the time, that meant that no agreement could be signed for any employees.

Use of this tactic has been a major annoyance to the larger unions and the OSŽ was particularly vocal in calling for a change in labour law to make it possible to sign an agreement with the approval of the majority on the union side. This was backed by ČMKOS and included in amendments to labour law in 2006, but it was later found unconstitutional by the Constitutional Court on the grounds that 'majority' was inadequately defined. The change was opposed most vigorously by the locomotive drivers, who even staged a 30-minute strike on 16 March 2006. They later switched their position when one of their basic organisations split off in 2007 to form a new union, the *Cech strojvůdců* (Locomotive Drivers' Guild), that exercised its right to take part in collective bargaining, pressing its own demands on working conditions. Any further amendment to the law will await a parliament and government sympathetic to union requests.

In other transport areas, fragmentation followed a slightly different course, but in all cases reflected a relatively favourable environment for trade union activity. In 2009, nine unions signed agreements on behalf of different groups of employees at Prague Airport. Pilots were independent and, enjoying market strength and able to threaten strike action, broadly satisfied their demand for payment comparable to major Western European airlines. Aircraft mechanics and air traffic controllers also had independent unions with bargaining power as a strike by either of them would immediately ground all aircraft.

Other cabin crew belonged mostly to the ČMKOS-affiliated *Odborový svaz dopravy* (OSD, Transport Workers' Union), leaving diverse airport personnel with limited bargaining power in the ČMKOS-affiliated *Odborový svaz zaměstnanců letectví* (OSZL, Union of Aviation Employees). All sign separate agreements with Czechoslovak Airlines and with companies that split off from it in reorganisations. Thus, in this case, as with some other unions, the greatest bargaining power and the greatest willingness to use the strike weapon was associated with the greatest distance from the mainstream of the Czech union movement. Urban public transport was another reasonably stable environment in which labour's market power was strong and the strike weapon could be effective. A total of 14 distinct unions operated in Prague, without clear delineation of the groups they represented. Some organisations have existed alone and occasionally join an existing union. One from the Prague underground started cooperating with the OSD, signed a contract for services such as legal advice in exchange for a fee and then decided to affiliate fully in 2007.

Figure 2 Changing union structure in road and rail transport and communications



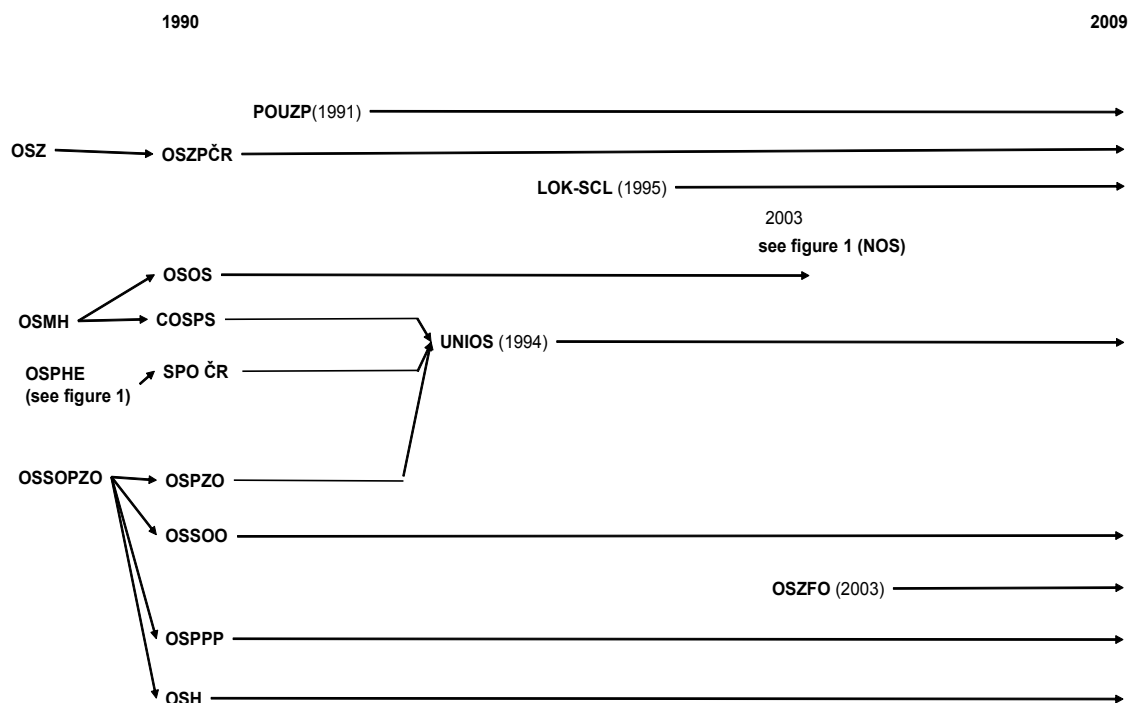
Note: NOS PVSD ČM = *NOS pracovníků veřejné silniční dopravy ČM* (Independent Trade Union of Public Road Transport of Bohemia and Moravia); OODP Metro = *Odborová organizace Dopravního podniku Metro* (Trade Union Organisation of the Public Transport Enterprise Metro); OSDSH = *Odborový svaz dopravy a silničního hospodářství* (Trade Union of Workers in Transport and Roads); OS PCL = *Odborový svaz pracovníků civilního letectví* (Trade Union of Workers in Civil Aviation); OS PVH = *Odborový svaz pracovníků vodní dopravy* (Trade Union of Workers in Water Transport); OSS = *Odborový svaz spojů* (Trade Union of Communications); Železnic (Trade Union of Railway Workers).

As already indicated, such fragmentation was often associated with bad relations between unions and their leaders. That did not prevent some cases of joint action around common demands. A striking example was in 2009–2010 when

the government proposed to tax employees' benefits in kind. This was an important issue in transport where subsidised travel was often a major benefit negotiated through collective agreements. Unions responded by forming a coalition with 19 members which threatened – and reached the brink of – national strike action in March 2010. The unions' demands were accepted, but their unity was not set to go any further. The logic of maintaining independent existences remained strong and there were no thoughts of cementing unity through mergers.

Figure 2 shows the subdivision and occasional reunification of unions in the transport sector, with the clear dominance of the former trend over the period as a whole. Unions are included where they have maintained a significant public profile, although some are very small. As in Figure 1, separation is recorded only where one or more basic organisations left an established union to set up a new one. Where unions emerged without this start they are counted as completely new. This applies to most of the new unions on the railways. Several claimed a long history from the pre-state socialist period, but they generally emerged without the backing of an existing basic organisation. Aviation is also omitted, apart from two unions that clearly emerged out of the pre-1990 transport union. More detail would largely show the frequent emergence of new unions – some from the early 1990s and several registered in 2003 – and no mergers.

Figure 3 Changing union structure in the public sector



Note: COSPS = Českomoravský odborový svaz pracovníků služeb (Czechoslovak Trade Union of Workers in Services); OSMH = Odborový svaz místního hospodářství (Trade Union of Workers in the Local Economy); OSPZO = Odborový svaz pracovníků zahraničního obchodu (Trade Union of Workers in Foreign Trade); OSSOPZO = Odborový svaz státních orgánů, peněžnictví a zahraničního obchodu (Trade Union of State Organs, Finance and Foreign Trade); OSZ = Odborový svaz zdravotnictví (Trade Union of Health Workers); SPO ČR = Sdružení plynárenských odborů v ČR (Association of Gas Workers' Unions).

For a further comparison, Figure 3 shows the contrasting position for some public sector unions. This includes the merger process which created the UNI-OS union but, again, some new unions also emerged, representing particular professional or occupational groups. They typically could not be based on existing basic organisations, as those brought together all occupations within a workplace.

5.5 Independent unions

A large number of unions existed outside these centres, but only a few of them were of any significance. This included some that left ČMKOS and did not consider ASO a serious alternative, notably the print workers' union, which left in 1996, and *Odborový svaz zaměstnanců sklářského, keramického, bižuterního průmyslu a porcelánu* (OSZSKPB, Trade Union of Employees of Glass, Ceramic, Costume Jewellery and Porcelain Industries) which left in 1998. For the first of these, the principal reason was a personality issue. In the second it was disagreements over the handling of union property. Both also complained about the (inevitably) stronger voice of the largest unions. It is probably significant that neither had a major need for political influence, but both maintained some international contacts.

These independent unions were joined by an enormous number of very small unions. As indicated in the discussion of union and labour force data, many organisations calling themselves unions were of little significance and it is impossible to assess how far they were genuinely independent or took part in collective bargaining. Some clearly were professional bodies or little more than pressure groups, all benefiting from the law that allowed the registration of a union with only three signatures. Many remained registered despite showing no public sign of any activity. Among the more significant were some basic organisations that either never joined or that left established unions at some point: they therefore did not compete with another larger union in their workplace. This included fire-fighters in Prague (registered in 1993 but subsequently moribund) and employees of the Plzeň brewery that registered in September 1997 and signed collective agreements with management on behalf of employees in three breweries: they showed no activity beyond that and avoided participation in ČMKOS-led protests. The glass workers' union lost some basic organisations in 1993 and 1997, which led to two very small independent unions, one of which joined ASO. Opposition to the union leadership appeared to stem from personality conflicts rather than policy disagreements.

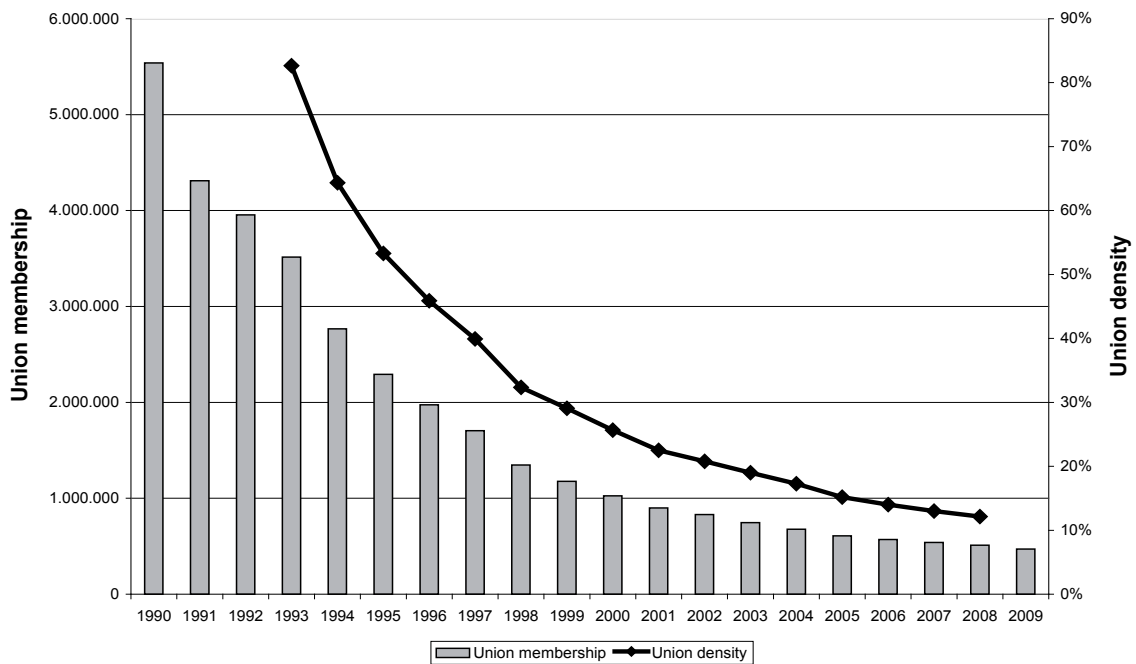
Two final points should be made on union fragmentation. First, the law provides protection against the victimisation of union office-holders and this may be an incentive to set up and register an organisation. This is a peripheral phenomenon, but KOVO has reacted by insisting that it would accept no more than one organisation from one workplace. The second point is that there is very little sign of managements creating bogus or 'yellow' unions deliberately to disrupt collective bargaining. It is, of course, possible that many of the small, independent unions operating under one employer are not genuinely

independent of management, but there appear to be no cases of unions established by managements hampering the activities of established unions in the same workplace. This is surprising and has indeed surprised some union leaders. It could be explained either by managements' lack of imagination in thinking up tactics to counter unions or by their lack of interest in such tactics. That, in turn, could reflect a desire for genuine collective bargaining with the main representative of employees or a view that unions do not present a major threat to their interests. Unions have been suspicious of a few cases in the past, including one on the railways. However, its blocking of the collective agreement for 1997 proved unhelpful to management. The failure to reach agreement and the abandonment of collective bargaining meant that the railway workers' union could undertake strike action without breaking the law.

6. The development of union membership

Union membership declined steadily from 1990. This applies to almost every union in almost every year for which data are available. For reasons explained in the next section, the most reliable data are for ČMKOS unions and Figure 4 shows the trend in its total membership, including pensioners and other inactive members (largely women on maternity leave). The overall decline reduced membership in 2009 to only 13.4 per cent of the 1993 level. Part of this was due to some unions leaving the confederation which was not balanced by new unions joining. Allowing for this by comparing only those unions that remained within ČMKOS over the whole period still shows a decline to 15.4 per cent of the 1993 level in 2009. Subsequent tables break this down using a sample of unions across different branches of the economy and including two from outside ČMKOS. These show some variations in trends that are then explained in a discussion of underlying causes of decline.

Figure 4 Trends in membership of ČMKOS-affiliated unions and gross union density, 1990-2009



Note: 1990–92 shows Czech union membership within ČSKOS only. All membership figures are for 30 June. Labour force survey data include the armed forces and family members as employees, but exclude the self-employed, employers and members of producer cooperatives. Union density is based only on ČMKOS membership figures and includes inactive members, such as pensioners.

Source: Union membership: ČMKOS congress reports; Dependent labour force: Czech Statistical Office, Statistical Yearbook of the Czech Republic, calculated from Table 10-18 or equivalent, various years

Table 3 shows membership trends in unions that represent predominantly manual workers in the private sector. The most dramatic decline here was for textiles and leather, but there were sharp falls for miners, construction and glass and related industries. There was a steady trend in each case, but severe falls in individual years, too. Textiles and leather saw membership roughly halve from 1995 to 1997, while OSZSKBP membership fell most rapidly in 2008–2009. KOVO did relatively well, with the biggest membership fall in the 1990s, over 10 per cent each year, and then showed some signs of stabilising in the new decade, with very small declines in active membership in 2005 and 2007. Rapid decline was then resumed in 2009 with a 13 per cent drop in active membership.

Table 3 Trends in membership of a sample of unions predominantly in the private sector with large manual worker membership, 1993-2009

	KOVO	OS TOK	OSPHGN	STAVBA	OSZSKBP
1993	670,798	133,035	170,496	201,368	58,301
1997	411,528	58,307	100,804	86,672	31,924
2001	250,885	29,572	56,876	–	15,559*
2005	186,170	15,908	38,740	25,616	11,629
2009	147,758	5,474	24,882	19,002	5,067

Note: * Figure from 2002.

Source: ČMKOS congress reports and individual unions.

Table 4 shows the trends for some unions representing predominantly manual, or lower grade service, employees in workplaces with a high proportion, or recent history, of state ownership. The transport union benefited from mergers which helped to stem the decline in membership. Nevertheless, these unions clearly fared better than the ČMKOS average, as most clearly demonstrated by the larger, ASO-affiliated railway workers and by the much smaller union representing diverse occupations at Prague Airport. This is consistent with there being particularly favourable conditions for union activity in transport, as argued in the preceding section.

Table 4 Trends in membership of a sample of unions with high membership of manual and lower level employees in sectors with a strong public-sector presence, 1993-2009

	OSZPTNS	OSŽ	OSD	OSZL
1993	95,756	164,002	51,433	1,875
1997	68,525	114,356	36,657	1,064
2001	47,038	–	25,259	862
2005	30,937	70,792*	20,010	–
2009	21,265	53,063 **	14,666	735

Notes: * Figure from October 2005; ** Figure from December 2008.

Source: ČMKOS congress reports and individual unions.

Table 5 shows trends for a number of unions that have membership overwhelmingly in the public sector, often dominated by professional employees. These showed rapid decline, similar in extent to that of unions in manufacturing, with the exception of the fire-fighters. Size of union made little difference, although it might be expected that smaller unions would suffer more due to their inability to offer such a full range of services.

Table 5 Trends in membership of a sample of predominantly public-sector unions, 1993-2009

	OSH	OSPVV	VOS	OS SOO	OSZSP	ČMOS PŠ
1993	6,602	7,049	27,175	123,775	182,260	251,221
1997	6,284	4,412	18,138	71,189	72,389	173,259
2001	6,176	3,115	11,766	47,033	50,540	78,388
2005	6,488	2,177	8,004	32,806	44,911	–
2009	6,559	1,787	5,980	26,510	35,296	37,481

Source: ČMKOS congress reports and individual unions.

Table 6 shows trends in unions representing employees in commercial services. Fortunes here were varied. The union for finance showed occasional annual increases in membership – there was even a 36 per cent increase from 1990 to 1993 when employment in the sector increased by 126 per cent – but the decline over the whole period was similar to that for unions that suffered a steady loss in membership. The other two unions listed here showed catastrophic membership declines, especially in the early years, and with a very marked drop in hotels and catering from 1996 to 1997. Retailing showed some signs of stabilising at the end of the period.

Table 6 Trends in membership of a sample of unions in market service sectors, 1993-2009

	OSPPP	OSPO	ČMOS PHCR
1993	43,864	136,805	30,193
1997	27,040	37,535	6,069
2001	15,198	17,285	2,710
2005	10,108	11,583	1,636
2009	9,582	9,751	931

Source: ČMKOS congress reports and individual unions.

The comparison between these unions, and more detailed data on trends in those sectors and on organisation within unions, show that the decline includes loss of members where employment fell and reduced union coverage whether employment declined or not. Declining membership in, and often complete closure of, basic organisations was not balanced by the creation of new organisations in expanding and emerging workplaces. Indeed, in some unions, hardly any new organisations were created. The decline can be explained in terms of six key points – listed below – which show the influences

of post-1989 economic changes and of attitudes and structures related to the heritage of state socialism. Their importance varies between sectors of the economy, for example with the first clearly dominant in some cases, but of little importance in others. There were persistent efforts from at least part of the union movement to reverse, or at least stem, this downward trend, as indicated in discussion of the individual points, but nothing proved successful.

6.1 Declining sectoral employment

The total size of the dependent labour force in 2008 was similar to that in 1993. Nevertheless, the Czech economy had undergone sweeping changes, including the complete disappearance of many workplaces and rapid decline in employment in others. The importance of declining employment is self-evident for many individual unions. Textile and leather workers are an obvious, if somewhat extreme example. The total number of employees in these sectors had fallen to about 30 per cent of its 1993 level by 2009. However, as indicated in Table 3, union membership fell much more rapidly both as the proportion of members in a workplace fell (down from 77 per cent to 26 per cent in workplaces where the union had an organisation between 1993 and 2009) and as basic organisations closed even where employment continued. More generally, declining employment in the sectors explained only a part of falling union membership. It obviously also provides no explanation of the failure to expand membership in growing sectors.

6.2 Reorganisation within enterprises and sectors

Unions clearly suffered where changes involved the transformation of employment relations. An example was newspaper distribution in which the almost complete replacement of a permanent by a casual labour force was followed by a decline in membership of that section of the communication workers' union (OSZPTNS), from 4,737 members in 1994 to a mere 20 in 2009. Other unions suffered when reorganisation meant transferring activities between workplaces. A striking example was in state administration. Regional bodies were dissolved after 1990, the work continuing in district and lower level offices, and then recreated in a different form in 2001. Union organisations were formed in only some of the 14 regional offices. The Firefighters' Union, almost unique in maintaining membership, illustrates the benefits of stability as employment continued in largely the same locations and under the same owners. Even there, there was some decline in coverage, from over 100 per cent in 1993 – pensioners were included in membership data – to 67 per cent in 2008, following a significant increase in employment. Moreover, the firefighters' experience needs to be set against some quite rapid declines in other parts of the public sector, such as health and education, where there was also considerable employment stability.

Unions suffered during privatisation in the mid 1990s where established enterprises were split up and the work continued in smaller, private firms. This

blow was felt with particularly dramatic force in restaurants in the mid 1990s. It was also common for unions to suffer collapse when private firms suffered bankruptcy, leading to substantial job losses in the parts that survived: members blamed the union for failing them. However, subdivision was less of a threat where unions were well-entrenched and the new units big enough to support a sizable union organisation. The railways experienced some subdivision and transfer of activities into separate companies around 2007, but that actually helped to stem the decline in union membership as these employees felt the greatest need of union protection.

6.3 Employer hostility

Employer hostility, or often just disapproval, encouraged many basic organisations to close and is quoted by unions as an explanation for some of the decline in the 1990s, as higher-level employees, or those seeking promotion, were encouraged to relinquish union membership. Employer hostility could also hamper the creation of organisations in new workplaces and in this connection there have been reports of bullying, both by Czech-owned and even some very prominent foreign-owned firms, including the motor-parts manufacturer Robert Bosch and the retail chains, Lidl and Discount Plus. The methods included threats that pay would be cut for union members, or for all employees, if a union organisation were formed, and attempts at the physical intimidation of activists. Unions in manufacturing and retailing have been able to respond at best with mild protests. Strike action has never been taken for union recognition. The union representing retail workers *Odborový svaz pracovníků obchodu* (OSPO, Union of Commercial Employees), facing foreign-owned chains, claimed some success from a moderate approach, aiming to start bargaining and win recognition from an employer by setting out only very modest demands. Unions often feel that the greatest hostility comes from local managements rather than the parent company. Czech unions have therefore used contacts with union centres in Western Europe, in the company's home base, or information and contacts through European Works Councils, to put pressure on the local management.

This helps to improve working conditions where a union organisation exists, but OSPO in 2009 still had fewer than 2,000 members out of more than 60,000 employees of foreign-owned retail chains. It had no members in the Czech-owned retail sector, largely made up of small shops, apart from cooperatives that had broadly retained their organisational form from before 1990. Employer hostility undoubtedly is an issue but, as reported by many union activists both in services and manufacturing, it is often not as big an obstacle as lack of employee interest. Recruitment campaigns, by leafleting and canvassing employees, typically yield poor results. Pay and conditions in multinational companies often seem good and employees are unconvinced of the benefits of union membership. Indeed, new organisations often emerge precisely because an employer behaves aggressively towards employees who then see the need for a union able to ensure that labour law is respected. This has helped to provide the very small footholds in rapidly expanding foreign-owned telecom-

munications, retail and catering activities and also in some new branches of foreign manufacturing companies.

6.4 Lack of employee interest

There is a common complaint among unions that the young generation has little interest in unions and little understanding of their importance. More generally, unions are seen by part of the population as linked to the state socialist past. To some extent this attitude is reinforced by unions' own evolution. As their membership ages they are easily perceived as organisations addressing the social needs of those nearing, or past, retirement age. This perception can be reinforced as union organisations maintain social and recreational activities that appear to the young to be continuations from a bygone age. It can be further strengthened by the presence of pensioner members, generally high in unions representing groups with a strong occupational identity and rising to 26 per cent for KOVO and construction workers and to 32 per cent of the total for railway workers. The key strategies among ČMKOS-affiliated unions for countering lack of employee interest are publicising the success of collective bargaining and offering a range of further benefits.

The perception of union leaders is that prospective members are guided by a narrowly instrumentalist approach. They see unions in the same way as they were seen before 1990, as organisations that take contributions and give benefits in return. They want to see a positive balance from the 1 per cent of their pay they contribute to a union in the form of a direct individual return. They are not easily persuaded by arguments of the benefits of collective representation. There is a very similar pattern to the individual benefits that unions offer. These typically include legal services, a range of deals negotiated with private companies and both routine and emergency payments from funds to cover traditional costs, such as funerals, and help to members facing serious difficulties, such as those caused by floods or unemployment. Decisions on who receives help, and how much, are sometimes automatic but often dependent on the discretion of a union body. Some unions also use their wealth to provide facilities for cheap holidays, both in the Czech Republic and abroad. Much of this is believed to be well-received by members and to help with recruitment.

6.5 Weak traditions of militancy

There is no easy remedy for an underlying weakness of traditions of collective action and solidarity. There were a few spontaneous protests in the early 1950s, but effectively no collective opposition to the communist authorities in the whole period after 1948. Traditions of trade unionism built on conflict with employers could not be passed down through the generations that lived through state socialism. Nor were they regenerated in the years after 1990, as strike action hardly ever took place. As indicated above, only once on the railways and once at Škoda cars did significant numbers of employees embark on potentially unlimited strike action, with all the pressures and fears associated

with such a step. Both disputes ended fairly quickly. The unions could claim success against both employers. As indicated above, railway workers forced concessions from the government. Škoda workers won significant pay rises. However, this did not lead other groups of employees to follow their example. Unions typically do not regret this lack of strikes. It can also be interpreted (or presented) as a sign of strength or of good sense that conflicts can be resolved by negotiation. Experience from the very first substantial strike, in rural buses in 1992, was that strikes attract very negative publicity for the union movement as a whole. They are therefore not welcomed by those unions not taking part. They are often viewed more positively, and even seen as a source of pride, by those that stage the strike. Historical studies in many countries leave little doubt that collective union action has been important in the history of trade unions in creating a sense of solidarity and in inspiring new generations of activists. In its absence, it is more difficult to find activists willing to come forward to establish new union organisations, or to continue running existing organisations.

6.6 Union organisational structure

A number of features of trade union structure that emerged in 1990 made it more difficult for the union movement as a whole to resist and reverse the membership decline. The structure of a weak confederation, weak sectoral unions and maximum authority vested in basic organisations inevitably promoted inertia. It made it more difficult to achieve mergers, as indicated above, and more difficult to respond to structural changes in the economy. While controlling the bulk of financial resources, basic organisations were also the least appropriate arena for setting the agenda for union activities or for developing new kinds of union activity, such as steps to raise the movement's media profile. Other features of union structure may not have been ideal, but the position of basic organisations undoubtedly weakened the unions' ability to cope with the points listed above. Indeed, their central position meant that, as they declined and weakened, so too the whole movement declined and weakened. Almost all unions experienced a decline in the size of basic organisations. Where precise data are available, it is clear that organisations in 2009 were on average often less than half the size of those in 1993, leaving the average size of many unions uncomfortably small. It was still just over 100 for KOVO and 141 for the railway workers, both unions that organised under some large employers, but under 50 for many other unions.

The overall size of a union made little difference to the extent of membership decline, but those with larger basic organisations did seem to be more resilient. A small organisation meant a smaller pool of activists able to propagate an attractive face for trade unionism. It often also meant extinction, leading to the loss of all members, once the last activist retired. This was a factor accelerating the decline in total membership. The organisational structure also made it harder to set up new organisations which typically had to start from scratch with an initiative from new members, without a base of individual union members. A very small number of unions saw a partial remedy in an

alternative structure whereby members join the union first rather than a basic organisation. This could reduce the administrative burden on basic organisations and also make it easier to merge organisations or find other means of retaining members when workplaces closed. There have been a few isolated voices for going further, to a structure of membership in a single centralised union. That model exists in some countries, but would encounter enormous obstacles in view of the recent history of Czech trade unionism.

7. Conclusion

Czech trade unions suffered a steady decline in membership after 1989. It is not possible to calculate union coverage precisely, in the sense of the percentage of employees who are union members. A reasonable estimate is that this had fallen to about 10 per cent at the end of the period. Much of this decline should be considered inevitable, in view of the level and nature of membership at the start, the extent and speed of structural changes in the economy and the need for unions to find a new role for themselves. Much of the decline could be linked to choices made within unions, especially on the organisational structure that they adopted. That, too, would not have been easy to change, in the wake of reactions to the past that took unions towards a very high degree of decentralisation.

However, membership figures give a deceptive impression of union influence. ČMKOS claim 900,000 participants in a general strike in June 2008 protesting against government proposals to cut social spending. That suggests an ability to mobilise opinion on a scale not much below that of a protest strike in 1994 against pension reform. Unions in the early years had a higher membership, but much of it was the result of inertia rather than commitment. Even the near-universal membership in workplaces was a deceptive indicator if it did not lead to significant gains from bargaining with employers. There has been a decline in coverage of collective bargaining, although, for reasons indicated earlier, this cannot be measured exactly. That decline is at least partly matched by the range of benefits achieved – as reported by the union side – and this has often been based on quite low levels of union membership within a workplace.

Above all, the main confederation has maintained the ability to influence political decisions in the areas that concern it most. Despite the pressures for decentralisation, the importance of influencing governments has given the confederation a central – and relatively high-profile – role. It has also visibly learned how to wield influence, combining work through tripartite structures, lobbying and protest actions. A crucial element here has been the development of expertise such that it can comment on economic policy issues, producing and publishing high-quality analyses. This, too, is an area in which the confederation has visibly become more proficient. It kept out of major debates on the strategy for economic transformation in the early 1990s and unions then appeared irrelevant to the main themes in political debate. That was no longer the case in later years when ČMKOS was forthright in analysing the impact of fiscal reforms – both under Social Democrat-dominated and then right wing-dominated governments – and of the effects of world economic crisis in 2008.

An assessment of the state of Czech trade unions in 2009, therefore, requires recognition of both negative and positive features. The former are embodied in the declining membership, coverage and activity levels in basic organisations. The latter are embodied in improved knowledge of how to get the best results from enterprise-level bargaining and an improved ability to exercise influence at the national level.

Sources and acknowledgements

Literature in English on Czech trade unions since 1989 is relatively limited. The European Trade Union Institute has published basic information with some analysis (Fišera 1996). A number of journal articles provide information and analysis in different periods (Myant 1993, 1997, 2010; Myant and Smith 1999; Pollert 1997a, 1997b; Stasek 2005). There has been considerable interest in tripartism and its application in the Czech Republic has been pursued by a number of authors (Mansfeldova 1995; Kubínková 1997; Myant *et al.* 2000). Some sociological studies have been produced in Czech (Hradecká 1994) and ČMKOS published an analysis of a major empirical study of its members' attitudes (Waddington and Pollert 1997). The best sources for information are provided by ČMKOS, both on its website (www.cmkos.cz) and in publications issued at the time of congresses, reporting on past activities and experiences (ČMKOS 2010a, 2010b). Further information for this study was provided by discussions (between December 2009 and March 2010) with leading officials and employees of ČMKOS, leading officials (in almost all cases the President) of 26 ČMKOS-affiliated unions and leading officials of two independent unions and of two unions affiliated to ASO. The enormous and willing help given by those unions, especially the then ČMKOS Vice President Zdeněk Málek, made this study possible. The argument and conclusions are the sole responsibility of the author.

References

- Bloomfield, J. (1979) *Passive revolution: politics and the Czechoslovak working class, 1945–8*, London: Allison and Busby.
- ČMKOS (2010a) *Cesty, křižovatky, střety nových odborů: 20 let hájíme práva zaměstnanců* (Roads, crossroads and conflicts met by the new trade unions: we have defended the rights of employees for 20 years), Prague: ČMKOS.
- ČMKOS (2010b) *Zpráva Rady ČMKOS pro V. sjezd ČMKOS* (Report of the ČMKOS Council for the 5th Congress), Prague: ČMKOS.
- Fassmann, M. (2007) *Stínová ekonomika a práce na černo* (The shadow economy and informal labour), Prague: Briggs & Co.
- Fišera, I. (1996) *Handbook of trade unions in Europe: Czech Republic*, Brussels: ETUI.
- Hradecká, I. (1994) Odbory jako sociální aktér (Trade unions as a social actor), *Sociologický časopis* (Sociological Journal), 30(3), 329–344.
- Kárník, Z. (2002) *České země v éře první republiky (1918–1938)* (The Czech lands in the period of the First Republic), vol. 2, Díl druhý, Prague: Nakladatelství Libri.
- Kraus, V. (1998) *Dějiny Typografické besedy, I. díl 1862–1918* (A history of the typographical circle, 1st volume, 1862–1918), Prague: Typografická beseda odborový svaz zaměstnanců polygrafické výroby v Čechách, na Moravě a ve Slezsku.
- Kubínková, M. (1997) *Monograph on tripartism and industrial relations*, Prague: ČMKOS internal material.
- Kupka, J. (1974) *Postavení a úloha odborů za socialismu* (The position and role of trade unions under socialism), Prague: Práce.
- Mansfeldova, Z. (1995) Tripartism in the Czech Republic, in R. Kyloh (ed.) *Tripartism on trial: tripartite consultations and negotiations in Central and Eastern Europe*,

- Geneva: International Labour Organization, International Labour Office Central and Eastern European Team, 60–8.
- Mansfeldová, Z. (1997) Sociální partnerství v České republice (Social partnership in the Czech Republic), in L. Brokl et al. (eds) *Reprezentace zájmů v politickém systému České republiky* (Representation of interests in the political system of the Czech Republic), Prague: Sociologické nakladatelství, 99–150.
- Myant, M. (1993) Czech and Slovak trade unions, *Journal of Communist Studies*, 9(4), pp. 59–84 (also published in M. Waller and M. Myant (eds) (1994) *Parties, trade unions and society in East-Central Europe*, Ilford: Frank Cass, 59–84).
- Myant, M. (2007) Trade unions in the Czech Republic, in C. Phelan (ed.) *Trade union revitalisation: trends and prospects in 34 countries*, Bern: Peter Lang, 335–346.
- Myant, M. (2010) Trade union influence in the Czech Republic since 1989, *Czech Sociological Review*, 46(6).
- Myant, M., and S. Smith (1999) Czech trade unions in comparative perspective, *European Journal of Industrial Relations*, 5(3), 265–285.
- Myant, M., B. Slocock and S. Smith (2000) Tripartism in the Czech and Slovak Republics, *Europe-Asia Studies*, 52(4), 723–739.
- OS TOK (1996) *Vystoupení a dokumenty III. sjezdu Odborového svazu pracovníků textilního, oděvního a kožedělného průmyslu Čech a Moravy* (Presentations and documents of the 3rd congress of the Trade Union of Textile, Clothing and Leather Industry Workers of Bohemia and Moravia), Prague: OS TOK.
- Pollert, A. (1997a) From acquiescence to assertion? Industrial relations in the Czech Republic, 1989–1995, in G. Schienstock, P. Thompson and F. Traxler (eds) *Industrial relations between command and market. A comparative analysis of Eastern Europe and China*, New York: Nova Science, 73–121.
- Pollert, A. (1997b) The Transformation of Trade Unionism in the Capitalist and Democratic Restructuring of the Czech Republic, *European Journal of Industrial Relations*, 3(2), 203–228.
- Richter, J. and K. Kouřil (1970) *Postavení a úloha odborů za socialismu* (The position and role of trade unions under socialism), Prague: Práce.
- Souček, J. (2006) Kampaň na podporu kolektivního vyjednávání podnikových kolektivních smluv na rok 2007 (The campaign in support of collective bargaining for collective agreements for 2007), *Kováč* (27), 25 August.
- Stasek, F. (2005) Employee relations in the Czech Republic – past, present and future, *Employee Relations*, 27(6), 581–591.
- Waddington, J. and Pollert, A. (1997) *Odbory v České republice* (Trade unions in the Czech Republic), Prague: ČMKOS.
- Zárubová, D., and J. Kašparová (1993) Co se stalo s majetkem ROH (What happened with ROH property), *Sondy odborových svazů*, (17), 4.

Annexe 1: Availability and reliability of union and labour force data

There are no complete data on trade union membership or on the total number of trade unions. The Statistical Office does not collect data on union membership and there are no reliable survey data. By law (83/1990), a trade union organisation can be set up by three 'employees'. It then has to register with the Ministry of the Interior. There are no further requirements. The number of organisations registered and not subsequently deregistered that had 'trade union' or 'independent trade union' at the start of their title in April 2010 was 397. This includes many that are not reported elsewhere as engaged in activities and many in workplaces that no longer exist. It therefore exaggerates the number that function at all, let alone as unions that are clearly independent from, and negotiate with, employers. Many unions also start their titles with words such as 'association' or 'union', which makes it impossible to distinguish those that are clearly trade unions. The most reliable data are from unions affiliated to ČMKOS because they need to record membership as a basis for contributions to the centre. Records in basic organisations should be reasonably accurate, as dues payments are almost always deducted from pay by the employer. Any bias is likely to be upward, owing to inertia with adjusting figures to declining membership. Total ČMKOS membership includes inactive as well as active members, but this has not always been reported in the same way by all unions. Most inactive members are pensioners and, as they pay a lower contribution, there may be less incentive to record membership carefully.

The Czech Statistical Office provides data on the labour force using surveys of the whole population from 1993. These data include all those who worked at least one hour in the relevant week and all those in the armed forces. More detailed data on employment in organisations with a lower limit on size, and one that changed at various points in the 1990s, is also available. Among those classified as self-employed are some who are effectively in a dependent relationship. There are no precise data on this, because it concerns illegal activity. The use of such dependent workers gained publicity in 1991 as the so-called Švarc system (named after a construction entrepreneur of that name). It was thereby possible to avoid paying tax and insurance contributions and to bypass employment protection and health and safety rules. Clarification of the law in 1993 made this explicitly illegal and Švarc was tried and imprisoned in 1994. The important legal provision was to define dependent work in terms of regularity, set hours, a continuous relationship to one 'employer' and setting of tasks by that 'employer'. Court rulings made the definition of employment rather stringent – requiring all the elements listed above – but once these are satisfied anybody, even if formally self-employed, is entitled to all the rights of an employee. The Švarc system has continued to exist in construction, manufacturing and hotels and catering, but on what scale is unclear and generally not where employees are in a strong enough position to call in inspectors from the labour and tax offices.

The size of the informal sector can only be estimated and estimates using different methods vary wildly (for discussion, see Fassmann 2007). A reasonable guess is that the informal economy would add about 10–15 per cent to GDP. This includes unregistered activities on top of, or instead of, a regular job. One survey in 2000 suggested that 38 per cent of the labour force were involved in some such activity. More than half of the self-employed and unemployed also had additional sources of earnings, with the total incomes of unemployed workers increased by about 60 per cent. Such quantification is extremely difficult, but a very rough estimate is of an addition to total gross pay of about 14 per cent. The sectors most affected are those with a high level of direct cash payments, particularly trade and repair, followed by construction, restaurants and hotels and agriculture. In restaurants and hotels it is common for employees to receive a very low declared wage which is then made up informally by the employer, thereby avoiding tax obligations on both sides. There are also a number of completely unregistered employees who are often foreign. Systematic attempts to address this issue started only after 2000. Detection depended on periodic inspections and these appeared largely ineffective for domestic citizens. They were more effective for foreign workers who required appropriate documentation to be allowed to work. In 2005, over one-fifth of foreign workers checked were found to be working illegally. Foreign workers then made up 5 per cent of the labour force, with Ukrainians the largest single group.

Annexe 2: List of events in the field of politics and industrial relations

1862	The first Czech trade union, bringing together print workers, is formed in Prague as a mutual benefit society.
1918	Independent, democratic Czechoslovak republic formed on the break-up of Austria-Hungary.
September 1938	Munich Agreement leads to the ceding of frontier areas to Nazi Germany.
March 1939	Nazi occupation of Czech lands. Slovakia becomes independent state, allied to Germany.
May 1945	Czechoslovakia re-established with a coalition government and one, united union movement, the ROH.
February 1948	Communist monopoly of power established. Trade unions subordinated to party control.

1968	'Prague spring' and attempt at democratic reform within state socialism leads to the emergence of a few independent unions and to some decentralisation and reorganisation.
1970–89	Period of 'normalisation' leads to firm reassertion of central authority.
November 1989	Mass demonstrations lead to the 'velvet revolution', ending communist power. Official unions remain passive, but strike committees formed in workplaces to back political change take the initiative in transforming the established unions.
December 1989	Government of National Understanding, including communist and opposition representatives. Parliament elects leading dissident and playwright Václav Havel president.
2–3 March 1990	Congress of the newly-emerging unions dissolves the ROH and establishes ČSKOS, uniting most of the newly formed unions.
May 1990	ČSKOS affiliates to the ICFTU.
June 1990	Civic Forum (a broad coalition committed to restoring parliamentary democracy spanning left and right) wins parliamentary elections with 49 per cent of Czech votes.
September 1990	Parliament approves the proposals for radical economic reform.
October 1990	Tripartite Councils for Economic and Social Accord (RHSD) are formed at the Czechoslovak, Czech and Slovak levels.
December 1990	Changes to employment and trade union laws agreed. Deal agreed to sell control of Škoda car manufacturer to Volkswagen.
1 January 1991	Economic 'shock therapy', including devaluation, price and trade liberalisation and partial currency convertibility.

28 January 1991	General Agreement signed between unions, government and employers.
November 1991	One-hour strike by locomotive drivers over unresolved financial problems of the railways.
1 December 1991	Association Agreement signed by Czechoslovakia with the EC, allowing opening of trade as prelude to later full accession.
10 February 1992	Strike by 15,000 rural bus drivers opposing service cuts following reductions in state subsidies.
January 1993	Czechoslovak federation dissolved, creation of independent Czech and Slovak Republics. Václav Klaus is Czech prime minister and Václav Havel is elected president.
8 January 1993	One-day underground strike by 100 miners in a North Moravian mine over pay demands.
19 May 1993	One-hour strike by railway workers over pay.
21 and 22 March 1994	ČMKOS protests over proposed pension reform, with petition and demonstration.
17 October 1994	Two-hour warning strike in the Škoda car manufacturer backing collective bargaining demands.
21 December 1994	15-minute warning strike called by ČMKOS backing demands over pension reform.
25 March 1995	ČMKOS demonstration with 90,000 participants protesting against government plans for social reform.
June 1995	Government downgrades the tripartite body.
1 November 1995	Strike by doctors, initiated by LOK. Subsequent joint demonstrations with other unions lead to continuation of existing pay arrangements.
14 December 1995	ČMKOS formally accepted as member of ETUC.

January 1996	Czech Republic becomes the first east-central European country accepted as a member of the OECD. ČMKOS accepted as member of trade union advisory group of OECD on 18 April.
June 1996	Parliamentary elections. Predominantly right-wing coalition continues, but with a very narrow majority.
28 January–8 February 1997	65,000 teachers take part in rolling strike action, demanding higher pay.
4 February 1997	Start of week-long railway strike.
April 1997	Following IMF criticism and pressure on the currency, the government adopts its first emergency ‘package’ of budget cuts.
May 1997	Currency speculation leads to the second ‘package’, with further budget cuts. Currency allowed to float.
8 November 1997	Demonstration organised by ČMKOS with 100,000 participants, opposing policies of the government – dismissed by Prime Minister Klaus as irrelevant.
13 November 1997	RHSD reconstituted with its original powers.
30 November 1997	Klaus government resigns and is replaced by interim government before parliamentary elections.
8 June 1998	One-hour strike by 470,000 employees of the state-budget sphere demanding higher pay.
June-July 1998	Parliamentary elections lead to minority Social Democrat government.
May 1998 to October 2001	Crisis in major engineering enterprises. Union protests, including a few short strikes.
31 March to 21 April 2000	Occupation strike by 45 miners in a North Bohemian mine set for closure.
1 January 2001	Amendments to labour law to bring it into line with EU law.

1 January – 10 February 2001	Independent union in Czech Television strikes against the new management, which is removed.
June 2002	Parliamentary elections lead to Social Democrat-dominated government.
1 September 2003	72,000 teachers take part in a one-hour strike demanding adequate funding for the agreed pay conditions.
13 September 2003	20,000 take part in demonstration called by ČMKOS and ASO against a proposed reform of public finance which would reduce social spending and the progressiveness of the tax system.
21 April 2004	200,000 take part in a one-hour strike called by 15 public-sector unions to maintain pay levels.
1 May 2004	Czech Republic joins the EU.
30 March 2005	Three-hour strike in Škoda car manufacturer leads to agreement to a 7% pay increase.
26 November 2005	A demonstration by 30,000, organised by ČMKOS and ASO, supports government changes to labour law.
June 2006	Parliamentary elections lead to unstable right-wing coalition proposing cuts in welfare provision and market-oriented reform of health care and pensions.
17 April 2007	Strike starts in Škoda car manufacturer: settled next day.
23 June 2007	A demonstration by 35,000, organised by ČMKOS, opposes government's proposed fiscal reform.
4 December 2007	One-day strike by school workers demanding higher pay and investment in schools.
24 June 2008	ČMKOS organises one-hour general strike, with 900,000 participating, opposing government's social policy reforms.

16 May 2009	ČMKOS organises demonstration in Prague, with 30,000 participants, as part of joint action with ETUC.
8 May 2009	Caretaker 'government of officials' takes over after defeat of right-wing coalition in a vote of no confidence.
9 December 2009	Police union, backed by other public-sector unions, calls a demonstration to oppose government proposals for a 4% cut in state employees' pay.

Annexe 3: Current union set-up (as at 2009)

The annex is limited to the confederations or union-centres and trade unions that are active today (2009).

Symbols used: ~ = circa; ° = expert's estimate; [] = no longer valid.

List of confederations

Confederations are sorted by abbreviation. *Konfederace umění a kultury* (KUK, Confederation of Art and Culture), founded in 1990, is not included here because its continued functioning as a union is doubtful after the confederation left the tripartite RHSD.

- (1) ASO *Asociace samostatných odborů* (Association of Independent Trade Unions)
History: founded in 1995. Affiliates: ~14 unions (2009). Total membership unknown. Website: www.asocr.cz

- (2) ČMKOS *Českomoravská konfederace odborových svazů* (Czech-Moravian Confederation of Trade Unions)
History: ČSKOS in 1990; *Českomoravská komora České a Slovenské konfederace odborových svazů* (ČMK ČSKOS, the Czech-Moravian Chamber of the Czechoslovak Confederation of Trade Unions) also formed in 1990 representing the unions in relation to the Czech government. Renamed *Českomoravská komora odborových svazů* (ČMOS, Czech-Moravian Chamber of Trade Unions) in 1992 and *Českomoravská konfederace odborových svazů* (ČMKOS, Czech-Moravian Confederation of Trade Unions) in 1998. Affiliates: 32 unions (2009). Members: 471,244; °20% non-active members including pensioners and members on maternity leave (2009). Website: www.cmkos.cz

Predecessors:

Československá konfederace odborových svazů (ČSKOS, Czechoslovak Confederation of Trade Unions, also referred to as *Česká a Slovenská konfederace odborových svazů* (Czech and Slovak Confederation of Trade Unions). History: founded in 1990 with two major territorial organisations that represented trade unions in relation to the Czech and Slovak governments: *Českomoravská komora České a Slovenské konfederace odborových svazů* (ČMK ČSKOS, the Czech-Moravian Chamber of the Czechoslovak Confederation of Trade Unions), and *Konfederácia odborových zväzov Slovenskej republiky* (KOZ SR, Confederation of Trade Unions of the Slovak Republic). Affiliates: ~60 unions (1990). *Revoluční odborové hnutí* (ROH, Revolutionary Trade Union Movement). History: newly founded in 1945; dissolved in 1990; most affiliates transferred engagement to ČSKOS. Affiliates: 17 unions (1989).

- (3) KOK *Křesťanská odborová koalice* (Christian Trade Union Coalition)
History: founded in 1990. Number of affiliates unknown. Members: [8,000] (2009, website figure). Website: <http://www.krestanskeodbory.cz>
- (4) OSČMS *Odborové sdružení Čech, Moravy, Slezska* (Trade Union Association of Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia)
History: founded in 1991. Number of affiliates unknown. Members: [12,000] (2009, website figure). Website: <http://oscms.sweb.cz>

List of major national unions

Unions are sorted by abbreviation.

(1) ASO affiliates

For some affiliates of ASO, particularly those without websites, it is unclear how far they are involved in genuine trade union activity. In the case of *Odborový svaz zaměstnanců pojišťoven* (Trade Union of Insurance Employees), the union has been left out since no other information is available.

- ČOSE *Český odborový svaz energetiků* (Czech Union of Power Station Workers)
Type: all grades single-sector union. Domain: all grades public sector; in utilities (exclusively power generation). Basic organisations: [19] (2009). History: breakaway from Odborový svaz energetiků in 1992; co-founded ASO in 1995. Members: [2,880] (2009). Website: www.cose.cz

- JSSZ** *Jednotný svaz soukromých zaměstnanců* (United Union of Private Employees)
Type: all grades occupational union. Domain: all grades private sector; in diverse sectors. History: founded in 1990; co-founded ASO in 1995. Members: [3,000] (2010). Website: www.asocr.cz/jssz
- LOK** *Lékařský odborový klub - Svaz českých lékařů* (Medical Doctors' Trade Union Club Union of Czech Doctors)
Type: professional association. Domain: white-collar private sector and all grades public sector; in health services. Basic organisations: 96 (2010). History: founded in 1995; affiliated to ASO since 1996. Membership unknown. Website: www.lok-scl.cz
- NOSAD** *Nezávislý odborový svaz automobilové dopravy* (Independent Trade Union for Bus Transport)
Type: all grades single-sector union. Domain: all grades public sector; in transport (in one town [Olomouc]). History: founded 2003; later affiliated to ASO. Membership: unknown. No website.
- OSPEA** *Odborové sdružení pracovníků elektrických drah a autobusové dopravy* (Union of Workers in Tram and Bus Transport)
Type: all grades single-sector. Domain: all grades public sector; in transport (overwhelmingly Prague tram drivers). History: founded 2003; later affiliated to ASO. Membership: [642] (2009, website). Website: www.ospea.cz
- Odborový svaz Ploché sklo* (Trade Union of Sheet-Glass Workers).
Type: all grades single-sector union (de facto a company union). Domain: all grades private sector; in glass (three plants of one firm making sheet glass). History: founded 1997; later affiliated to ASO. Membership unknown. No website.
- OSPZV** *Odborový svaz pracovníků zemědělství a výživy - Asociace svobodných odborů ČR* (Trade Union of Workers in Agriculture and Food Association of Free Trade Unions of the Czech Republic)
Type: all grades multi-sector union. Domain: all grades in private sector; in agriculture and food industry. History: founded in 1990; affiliated to ČSKOS from 1990 to 1993 and ČMK ČSKOS/ČMKOS from 1990 to 1995; co-founder of ASO in 1995. Members: °23,000 (2009). Website: www.ospzv-aso.cz

- OS UJP Praha *Odborové sdružení při UJP Praha a.s.* (Union Association of the Institute of Nuclear Fuels).
Type: all grades company union. Domain: all grades in public sector; in energy (Institute of Nuclear Fuels). History unknown; affiliated to ASO. Membership unknown. No website.
- OSŽ *Odborové sdružení železničářů* (Railway Workers' Union)
Type: all grades single-sector union. Domain: all grades in public sector; in railways; passengers transport (ČD) (50%), ČD Cargo, infrastructure and others (50%). Basic organisations: 377 (2008). History: founded in 1990; affiliated to ČSKOS from 1990 to 1993 and ČMK ČSKOS/ČMKOS from 1990 to 1998; affiliated to ASO since 1999. Members: 53,063; 32.3% non-active members (2008). Website: www.osz.org
- OSZFO *Odborové sdružení zaměstnanců finančních orgánů* (Trade Union Association of Employees in Financial Organs)
Type: white-collar single-sector union. Domain: white-collar public sector; in finance. History: newly-formed by members of Odborový svaz státních orgánů a organizací in 2003; affiliated to ASO since 2003. Membership unknown. Website: home.tiscali.cz/oszfo
- OSZJ *Odborové sdružení zaměstnanců jednoty* (Trade Union Association of Employees in Jednota)
Type: °union organisation as a part of a consumer cooperative. Domain unknown. History unknown. Membership unknown. No website.
- OSZJE *Odborový svaz zaměstnanců jaderné energetiky* (Trade Union of Nuclear Power Employees).
Type: all grades single-sector union. Domain: all grades public sector; in energy (nuclear power generation). History: founded 2000; affiliated to ASO since 2000. Membership unknown. Website: www.asocr.cz/jaderna_energetika
- ROSa *Regionální odborový svaz ROSa* (Regional Trade Union)
Type: all grades multi-sector regional union. Domain: all grades in public and private sector; in and around Ostrava; diverse activities (municipal police and chemical industry). History: founded in 2002; affiliated to ASO. Membership unknown. Website: www.ros-a.cz

(2) ČMKOS affiliates

Formally, all ČMKOS affiliates were all new, created by basic organisations in 1990 in structures that were chosen from below. However, it is noted when an affiliate claims links to the (very distant) past.

- ČMOSA *Českomoravský odborový svaz civilních zaměstnanců armády* (Czech-Moravian Trade Union of Civilian Employees of the Army)
Type: all grades single-sector union. Domain: all grades in public sector; in military; Ministry of Defence including officials in ministry, state enterprises (which repair equipment), 3 hospitals, forestry, agriculture, research institute, education, water. History: first reported in 1952; re-founded in 1990; affiliated to ČSKOS from 1990 to 1993 and ČMK ČSKOS/ČMKOS since 1990. Members: 6,174; 43.4% females; non-active members: 33.8% (2009). Website: cmosa.cmkos.cz
- ČMOS PHCR *Českomoravský odborový svaz pohostinství, hotelů a cestovního ruchu* (Czech-Moravian Trade Union of Restaurants, Hotels and Tourism, COS PHCR)
Type: all grades single-sector union. Domain: all grades in private service sector; in tourism, hotels and restaurants. Basic organisations: 29 (2009). History: founded in 1968; re-founded in 1990; affiliated to ČSKOS from 1990 to 1993 and ČMK ČSKOS/ČMKOS since 1990. Members: 931; 62.5% females; 28.4% non-active members (2009). Website: www.phcr.cz
- ČMOS PŠ *Českomoravský odborový svaz pracovníků školství* (Czech and Moravian Union of School Workers)
Type: all grades single-sector union. Domain: all grades in public sector; in education; teachers in schools (66%), non-teaching others (33%). History: founded in 1990; affiliated to ČSKOS from 1990 to 1993 and ČMK ČSKOS/ČMKOS since 1990. Members: 37,481 (2009). Website: www.skolskeodbory.cz
- HA *Herecká asociace* (Actors' Association)
Type: professional association. Domain: private sector; in culture (actors). History: founded in 1990; affiliated to KUK from 1990, later left; affiliated to ČMKOS since 2002. Members: 900 (2009). Website: <http://hereckaasociace.cmkos.cz>

- NOS PČR *Nezávislý odborový svaz Policie České republiky*
(Independent Trade Union of the Police of the Czech Republic)
Type: all grades single-sector union. Domain: all grades public sector; police. History: founded in 1990; affiliated to ČSKOS from 1990 to 1993 and ČMK ČSKOS/ČMKOS since 1990. Members: 3,530 (2009). Website: nosp.cz.
- NOSPPP *Nezávislý odborový svaz pracovníků potravinářského průmyslu a příbuzných oborů Čech a Moravy*
(Independent Trade Union of Workers in the Food Industry and Related Sectors of Bohemia and Moravia)
Type: all grades single-sector union. Domain: all grades in private sector; in food industry. History: founded in 1990; affiliated to ČSKOS from 1990 to 1993 and ČMK ČSKOS/ČMKOS since 1990. Members: 10,119; 52.7% females; 0.2% unemployed; 13.0% non-active members (2009). Website: nosppp.cmkos.cz
- OSD *Odborový svaz dopravy* (Transport Workers' Union)
Type: all grades multi-sector union. Domain: all grades in public sector; in transport; buses and road freight transport; urban public transport; air transport (especially at small airports); river transport. History: founded by merger in 1994; affiliated to ČMKOS. Members: 14,666 (2009). Website: www.osdopravy.cz.
- OS DLV *Odborový svaz pracovníků dřevopracujících odvětví, lesního a vodního hospodářství v ČR* (Wood, Forestry and Water Industries Workers' Trade Union in Czech Republic)
Type: all grades multi-sector union. Domain: all grades in private sector; in forestry (17%); furniture industry and wood working industry (26%); paper industry (12%); water industry (45%). History: founded in 1990; affiliated to ČSKOS from 1990 to 1993 and ČMK ČSKOS/ČMKOS since 1990. Members: 11,761; 8.2% non-active members (2009). Website: www.osdlv.cz
- OS ECHO *Odborový svaz ECHO* (Trade Union ECHO)
Type: all grades multi-sector union. Domain: all grades in private sector; in chemical industry; electricity generation and distribution. Basic organisations: 220 (2009). History: first time reported in 1880s; founded by merger in 2004; affiliated to ČMKOS. Members: 26,509 (2009). Website: www.os-echo.cz

- OSH** *Odborový svaz hasičů* (Firefighters Union)
Type: all grades single-sector union. Domain: all grades public sector; fireworkers and administration. History: founded in 1990; affiliated to ČSKOS from 1990 to 1993 and ČMK ČSKOS/ČMKOS since 1990. Members: 6,559; 7.0% females; 10.4% non-active members (2009). Website: www.osh.cz
- OS KOVO** *Odborový svaz KOVO* (Czech Metalworkers' Federation KOVO)
Type: all grades multi-sector union. Domain: all grades in private sector; in steel, engineering, electrical branches; agriculture and transport. History: first time reported in 1880; re-founded in 1990; affiliated to ČSKOS from 1990 to 1993 and ČMK ČSKOS/ČMKOS since 1990. Members: 147,758; 24.0% females; 30.0% non-active members (2009). Website: www.oskovo.cz
- OSPHGN** *Odborový svaz pracovníků hornictví, geologie a naftového průmyslu* (Union of Workers in Mining, Geology and Oil Industries)
Type: all grades multi-industry union. Domain: all grades in private sector; in mining, geology (quarrying), oil and engineering. History: founded in 1990; affiliated to ČSKOS from 1990 to 1993 and ČMK ČSKOS/ČMKOS since 1990. Members: 24,882 (2009). Website: osphgn.cmkos.cz
- OSPK** *Odborový svaz pracovníků knihoven* (Union of Library Workers)
Type: all grades single-sector union. Domain: all grades public sector; in libraries. Basic organisations: 35 (2009). History: founded in 1990; affiliated to KUK from 1990 to 1996; affiliated to ČMKOS since 2002. Members: 1,362; 96.4% females ; 19.8% non-active members (2009). Website: www.ospk.cz
- OSPKOP** *Odborový svaz pracovníků kultury a ochrany přírody* (Trade Union of Workers in Culture and Protection of Nature)
Type: all grades multi-sector union. Domain: all grades public sector; in culture and leisure (museums, galleries, national parks, zoo, botanical gardens, planetarium, various national monuments, National Library in Prague). History: founded in 1990; affiliated to KUK from 1990 to 1999; affiliated to ČMKOS since 2001. Members: 2,277 (2009). No website.

- OSPKZ *Odborový svaz pracovníků kulturních zařízení* (Trade Union of Workers in Cultural Institutions)
 Type: all grades multi-sector union. Domain: all grades public sector; in culture (cultural centres, theatres, cinemas). History: founded in 1990; affiliated to KUK from 1990 to 1999; affiliated to ČMKOS since 2001. Members: 1,798 (2009). No website of its own.
- OSPO *Odborový svaz pracovníků obchodu* (Union of Commercial Employees)
 Type: all grades single-sector union. Domain: all grades private sector; in consumer cooperatives (76%) and big chains (24%). Basic organisations: 154 (2008). History: founded in 1990; affiliated to ČSKOS from 1990 to 1993 and ČMK ČSKOS/ČMKOS since 1990. Members: 9,751; 74.7%; 25.9% non-active members (2009). Website: www.ospo.cz
- OSPPP *Odborový svaz pracovníků peněžnictví a pojišťovnictví* (Trade Union of Banking and Insurance Employees)
 Type: all grades single-sector union. Domain: all grades private sector; in banking and insurance (90%) and other activities (security services such as G4S and IT) (10%). History: first time reported in 1907; re-founded in 1990; affiliated to ČSKOS from 1990 to 1993 and ČMK ČSKOS/ČMKOS since 1990. Members: 9,582 (2009). Website: ospp.cmkos.cz
- OS PROJEKT *Odborový svaz PROJEKT* (Trade Union of the Project Workers of the Czech Republic)
 Type: blue-collar occupational union. Domain: blue-collar private sector; in metal-working industry (design workers). History: founded in 1990; affiliated to ČSKOS from 1990 to 1993 and ČMK ČSKOS/ČMKOS since 1990. Members: 215 (2009). No website.
- OSPVV *Odborový svaz pracovníků vědy a výzkumu* (Trade Union of Science and Research Workers, TUSRW)
 Type: all grades single-sector union. Domain: all grades public sector; in Academy of Sciences and Research Institute of Plant Production. Basic organisations: 39 (2009). History: founded in 1990; affiliated to ČSKOS from 1990 to 1993 and ČMK ČSKOS/ČMKOS since 1990. Members: 1,777 (2009); 57% females (2000); 21% non-active members (2009). Website: www.cmkos.cz/ospvv

- OSSOO** *Odborový svaz státních orgánů a organizací* (Trade Union of State Organs and Organisations)
Type: all grades single-sector union. Domain: all grades public sector; in local and central government administration. History: founded in 1990; affiliated to ČSKOS from 1990 to 1993 and ČMK ČSKOS/ČMKOS since 1990. Members: 26,510; 64.9% females; 18.4% non-active members (2009). Website: statorg.cmkos.cz
- OS STAVBA** *Odborový svaz Stavba České republiky* (Building Workers Union of the Czech Republic)
Type: all grades multi-sector union. Domain: all grades in private sector; in construction and building materials (manufacturing). Basic organisations: 331 (2009). History: first time reported in 1890; re-founded in 1990; affiliated to ČSKOS from 1990 to 1993 and ČMK ČSKOS/ČMKOS since 1990. Members: 19,002; 18.5% females; 26.3% (2009). No website.
- OS TOK** *Odborový svaz pracovníků textilního, oděvního a kožedělného průmyslu Čech a Moravy* (Trade Union of Textile, Clothing and Leather Industry Workers)
Type: all grades multi-sector union. Domain: all grades in private sector; in textiles, garments and footwear. Basic organisations: 56 (2008). History: founded in 1990; affiliated to ČSKOS from 1990 to 1993 and ČMK ČSKOS/ČMKOS since 1990. Members: 11,098; 16.3% non-active members (2008). Website: <http://ostok.cmkos.cz>
- OS UNIOS** *Odborový svaz UNIOS* (Trade Union UNIOS, TU UNIOS)
Type: all grades multi-sector union. Domain: all grades in public sector; in services provided by municipalities: gas (22%); public services (22%); housing cooperatives: 11%; urban heating (6%); others (production, hospitals, police) (39%). History: founded by merger in 1994; affiliated to ČMKOS. Members: 13,034; 43.0% females; 20.2% non-active members (2009). Website: www.osunios.cz
- OS VÚOK** *Odborový svaz zaměstnanců výrobních a účelových organizací kultury* (Trade Union of Workers in Production and Specialised Organisations related to Culture)
Type: all grades single-sector union. Domain: all grades in private sector; in handicrafts. History: founded in 1990; affiliated to ČSKOS from 1990 to 1993 and ČMK ČSKOS/ČMKOS since 1990. Members: 449 (2009); 56.8% females; 8.7% non-active members. No website.

- OSZL *Odborový svaz zaměstnanců letectví* (Union of Aviation Employees)
 Type: all grades multi-sector union. Domain: all grades public and private sector; in aviation. History: founded in 1991; affiliated to ČSKOS from 1991 to 1993 and ČMK ČSKOS/ČMKOS since 1990. Members: 704 (2009). No website.
- OSZPTNS *Odborový svaz zaměstnanců poštovních, telekomunikačních a novinových služeb* (Trade Union of Workers in Postal, Telecom and Newspaper Services Czech Republic)
 Type: all grades multi-sector union. Domain: all grades public and private sector; in post (61%), telecom (12%), distribution of newspapers (27%). Basic organisations: 102 (2009). History founded in 1990; affiliated to ČSKOS from 1990 to 1993 and ČMK ČSKOS/ČMKOS since 1990. Members: 21,265; 18.9% non-active (2009). Website: oszptns.cmkos.cz
- OSZSP ČR *Odborový svaz zdravotnictví a sociální péče v České republice* (Trade Union of the Health Service and Social Care of the Czech Republic)
 Type: all grades multi-sector union. Domain: all grades public sector; in health care (60%), social care (30%) and others (10%). Basic organisations: 387 (2009). History: founded in 1990; affiliated to ČSKOS from 1990 to 1993 and ČMK ČSKOS/ČMKOS since 1990. Members: 35,296; 80% females; 12% non-active members (2009). Website: <http://osz.cmkos.cz>
- SčSOO DP *Severočeské sdružení odborových organizací důlního průmyslu* (North Bohemian Association of Trade Union Organisations of the Mining Industry)
 Type: all grades single-sector union. Domain: private sector; in coal mining. History: breakaway from Odborový svaz pracovníků hornictví, geologie a naftového průmyslu in 2007; affiliated to ČMKOS. Members: 3,835. No website.
- SOSaD *Svaz odborářů služeb a dopravy* (Union of Services and Transport)
 Type: all grades single-sector union. Domain: all grades public sector; in railways. Basic organisations: 10 (2009). History: breakaway from Odborové sdružení železničářů in 2008; affiliated to ČMKOS since 2009. Members: 1,740 (2009). Website: www.sosad.cz

- (no abbrev.) *Unie – Odborový svaz profesionálních zpěváků České republiky* (Trade Union of Professional Singers of the Czech Republic)
Type: professional association. Domain: private sector; in culture (singers in opera and orchestras). History: founded in 1990; affiliated to KUK from 1990 to 1995; affiliated to ČMKOS since 2002. Members: 274 (2009). No website.
- UNIE OH *Unie – profesní a odborový svaz orchestrálních hudebníků České republiky* (Professional Union and Trade Union of Orchestra Musicians of the Czech Republic)
Type: professional association. Domain: private sector; in culture (orchestral musicians). History: founded in 1990; affiliated to KUK from 1990, later left; affiliated to ČMKOS since 2003. Members: 1,084 (2009). No website.
- VOS *Vysokoškolský odborový svaz* (University Trade Union)
Type: all grades single-sector union. Domain: all grades public sector; in education (lower level academics and technical workers). Basic organisations: 78 (2009). History: founded in 1990; affiliated to ČSKOS from 1990 to 1993 and ČMK ČSKOS/ČMKOS since 1990. Members: 5,980; 41% females; 12% non-active members (2009). Website: <http://vos.cmkos.cz>

Independent unions and other organisations

There are an enormous number of very small organisations calling themselves trade unions that are affiliated to no union centre and that should not be considered as genuine trade unions. Those listed below have all been involved in collective bargaining, but it is unclear, for example in the case of *Odborové sdružení PRAD [Preciosa a další]*, how far all are genuinely independent of management.

- CSČR *Cech strojvůdců ČR* (Engine Drivers' Guild)
Type: blue-collar occupational union. Domain: blue-collar public sector; train drivers. History: breakaway from Federace strojvůdců České republiky FS ČR in 2007. Membership unknown. Website: www.cscr.cz
- CZATCA *České sdružení řídicích letového provozu* (Czech Air Traffic Controllers' Association)
Type: white-collar occupational union. Domain: white-collar public sector; in aviation. History: founded in 1992. Affiliated to ASO from 2000 but no longer listed as affiliate. Membership unknown. Website: <http://www.asocr.cz/osrlp/>

- FS ČR *Federace strojvůdců České Republiky FS ČR* (Federation of Train Drivers of the Czech Republic)
Type: blue-collar occupational union. Domain: blue-collar public sector; train drivers. Basic organisations: 40 (2009). History: first time reported in 1896 and revived in 1968; re-founded in 1990. Membership unknown. Website: www.fscr.cz
- FV *Federace vozmistrů* (Federation of Rolling Stock Technicians)
Type: blue-collar occupational union. Domain: blue-collar public sector; in railways (rolling-stock repair and safety). History: founded in 1992. Membership unknown. Website: www.fvcr.cz
- FVČ *Federace vlakových čet* (Federation of Train Crews)
Type: blue-collar occupational union. Domain: blue-collar public sector; train crew (guards, conductors...). History: founded in 1991. Membership unknown. Website: www.fvc.cz
- FZ ČR *Federace železničářů ČR* (Federation of Railway Workers of the Czech Republic)
Type: blue-collar occupational union. Domain: blue-collar public sector; in railway. History: founded in 1990. Membership unknown. Website: www.federace.unas.cz
- OS DOSIA *Odborový svaz pracovníků dopravy, silničního hospodářství a autoopravárenství Čech a Moravy* (Union of Workers in Transport, Roads and Vehicle Repair of Bohemia and Moravia)
Type: all grades multi-sector union. Domain: all grades public and private sector; in road transport and road repair. History: founded 1990; affiliated to ČMKOS 1990-2005. Membership unknown. Website: www.dosia.cz.
- (no abbrev.) *Odborová organizace Plzeňského Prazdroje* (Trade Union Organisation of Plzeňský prazdroj)
Type: all grades company union. Domain: all grades private sector; in Plzeňský prazdroj. History: founded in 1997. Membership unknown.
- OOPR *Odborová organizace pracovníků radiokuminakce* (Union Organisation of Workers in Broadcasting)
Type: blue-collar union. Domain: public sector; in media (technical employees in broadcasting stations). History: formed in 1991 as breakaway from OSZPTNS; affiliated to ČMKOS from 1995 to 2008. Membership unknown. No website.

- OS PRAD** *Odborové sdružení PRAD [Preciosa a další]* (Trade Union Association PRAD [Preciosa and others])
Type: all grades single-sector organisation. Domain: all grades private sector; single enterprises, Preciosa, making artificial jewellery, °organisation led by company deputy director.
History: founded 1993. Membership unknown. No website.
- OSTB** *Typografická beseda odborový svaz zaměstnanců polygrafické výroby v Čechách, na Moravě a ve Slezsku* (The Typographical Circle Czech and Moravian Printing Workers' Union)
Type: all grades single-sector union. Domain: all grades in private and public sector; in printing industry. Basic organisations: 18 (2010). History: first time reported in 1862; founded in 1990; affiliated to ČSKOS from 1990 to 1993 and ČMK ČSKOS/ČMKOS from 1992 to 1998. Members: 1,216 (2010). No website.
- OSTG** *Odborový svaz Transgas* (Transgas Union)
Type: all grades company union. Domain: all grades private sector; Transgas. Basic organisations: 25 (2010). History: founded in 1997. Membership unknown. No website. <http://odborovy.svaz.sweb.cz/>
- OSZO DP-A** *Odborové sdružení základních organizací Dopravního podniku Autobusy* (Association of Basic Union Organisations of Public Bus Transport)
Type: all grades single-sector. Domain: all grades public sector; bus transport in Prague. History: founded 2003 by five basic organisations breaking away from OS DOSIA. Membership unknown. Website: www.oszo-dpa.cz
- OSZSKBP** *Odborový svaz zaměstnanců sklářského, keramického, bižuterního průmyslu a porcelánu* (Trade Union of Employees of Glass, Ceramic, Costume Jewellery and Porcelain Industries)
Type: all grades multi-sector union. Domain: all grades private sector; in glass (62%), ceramic (17%), costume jewellery (13%) and porcelain industries (7%). History: founded in 1990; affiliated to ČSKOS from 1990 to 1993 and ČMK ČSKOS/ČMKOS from 1990 to 1997. Members: 5,067 (2009). Website: www.volny.cz/os-sklo

-
- POUZZP** *Profesní odborová unie zdravotnických pracovníků Čech, Moravy a Slezska* (Professional and Trade Union of Health Workers of Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia)
Type: white-collar professional union. Domain: white-collar public sector; in health (overwhelmingly nurses and paramedics). History: founded in 1990 as a professional body; included trade union activities from 1991. Membership unknown. Website: www.pouzp.cz.
- UPD** *Unie pracovníků v dopravě* (Union of Workers in Transport)
Type: unknown. Domain: public sector; in public transport in Prague. History: founded 2003; intermittent participation in collective bargaining. Membership unknown. No website.
- UŽZ** *Unie železničních zaměstnanců* (Union of Railway employees)
Type: white-collar occupational union. Domain: white-collar public sector; in railway (administration). Basic organisations: 21 (2009). History: breakaway from Odborové sdružení železničářů in 1991. Membership unknown. Website: www.uzz.cz

**European
Trade Union Institute**

Bd du Roi Albert II, 5
1210 Brussels
Belgium

Tel.: +32 (0)2 224 04 70
Fax: +32 (0)2 224 05 02
etui@etui.org
www.etui.org

etui.