
EDITORIAL

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The overarching theme linking the various contributions to this eighth open issue of *Transfer* is the challenge for trade unions posed by the rapidly changing economic and political environment. A diverse range of sources of change are addressed, such as the political integration of Europe, the current economic and financial crisis, transnational restructuring of companies, the eastern enlargement of the EU and the adoption of EU directives.

The first two articles focus on the macro level, analysing how national trade unions in Denmark and Portugal respectively view political and economic developments at EU level. In their article on the attitudes of Danish trade unions to European integration, Herman Knudsen and Jens Lind revisit the findings of an earlier article (*Transfer*, 2000) in which they described the Danish trade unions' approach to European integration as rather sceptical and profoundly shaped by their desire to defend the Danish model of industrial relations as a 'sacred cow' against intervention via EU initiatives. Their contribution to this open issue of *Transfer* provides a succinct analysis of the Danish trade unions' approach to key EU initiatives since the Danish EEC entry in 1973, including the Single Market, the adoption of the EU Directives on information and consultation and on agency work, EU enlargement, and the most recent Euro Pact. Knudsen and Lind find that although the traditional scepticism of Danish trade unions has somewhat levelled off, they still take an ethnocentric position towards EU integration. Consequently, strategies of Danish trade unions still aim to preserve the voluntaristic Danish model of labour market regulation, which is characterized by a strong focus on free collective bargaining and minimalist state intervention via national or European legislation.

The second article by Hermes Augusto Costa takes us to Portugal, a country particularly hard-hit by the recent economic and financial crisis. Costa's contribution is a timely analysis of the far-reaching impact of the crisis and the concomitant austerity measures imposed by the ECB/European Commission/IMF troika in the field of industrial relations and how these measures are perceived by the two main trade union federations UGT and CGTP. Taking us on a journey through time since the accession of Portugal to the EEC in 1986, the author explores how the initial generally positive public perception of EU integration as a means of social and economic prosperity has since given way to considerable disillusionment in the light of growing unemployment, cuts in employment benefits, the proliferation of precarious employment, increases in working hours and growing social inequality as a consequence of the European and national austerity policies devised to cope with the effects of the economic and financial crisis. In relation to the trade unions, the author stresses the differing attitudes of the UGT, which has always supported the process of Portugal's incorporation into the EU, considering that it would contribute to the development of social democracy within the country, and the CGTP whose stance has always been more sceptical. The crisis and the series of austerity plans adopted since 2010 did seem to have brought the positions of the two organizations closer together: among other things, they jointly called their members to take part in important national action days to protest against these measures and against the marginalization of the trade unions during the preparation of the social pact. However, the fact that UGT subsequently

signed this pact while the CGTP rejected it serves, according to Costa, to reveal a new deepening of the trade union divisions over European integration.

The next two articles focus on the micro level, looking at the challenges for trade unions posed by transnational company strategies. The article by Valeria Pulignano and Paul Stewart looks at the factors which determine the capacity of trade unions to influence management's restructuring initiatives. Their analysis is based on four case studies of company-level restructuring in two French and two Irish companies. A key finding of their research is that the sole focus on national industrial relations frameworks exhibited by many institutionalist approaches is not enough to explain the differences within countries in local union responses to restructuring observed in the four cases. In fact, the responses of local trade unions to company restructuring – ranging from confrontational approaches of outright refusal to engage in negotiations on compulsory redundancies to cooperative approaches aimed at co-managing the intended restructuring process – can be more similar across countries with different national institutional settings than within one country with a shared institutional setting. Against this background, the authors argue that for a comprehensive analysis of local union responses, it is essential to also take into account the interplay of the following three company-specific set of variables which shape the strategic options available to local unions: (1) structural factors such as the company's financial situation, workforce composition and unionization rate; (2) attitudinal factors such as the corporate management strategy and the unions' attitude towards restructuring; and (3) the local unions' external links to local government and community and their internal links to other levels of employee interest representation.

Based on an empirical study of three French multinational corporations in the car industry with operations in both France and the central and eastern European countries (CEECs), the article by Violaine Delteil and Patrick Dieuaide illustrates how companies' human resources and industrial relations strategies become increasingly intermeshed, leading to what the authors call a 'management-led social dialogue'. The key characteristic of this form of social dialogue is that it is fine-tuned to accord with companies' industrial strategies and their decisions about where to locate production. The second strand of the investigation is the role which the national states and the EU played in the development of such a 'management-led social dialogue'. The authors argue that it has developed in a context of increasing state intervention which mainly aims to tailor the institutional framework of the social dialogue as closely as possible to the new economic constraints experienced by firms. In France, this has resulted in a process of decentralization of collective bargaining, which has given room for firms to adjust local labour regulation to the diversity of their industrial strategies. In the CEECs, state intervention has mainly consisted in offering a permissive institutional environment in order to attract foreign capital. The crisis has given another impetus to these state interventions: in France through the implementation of a strategy of defensive flexibility, in particular by means of state-subsidized short-time working arrangements; in the CEECs through a combination of numeric workforce flexibility and a strategy aiming to promote and enhance the national motor industry. In the final part of their article, Delteil and Dieuaide propose the hypothesis of the rise of a 'Porterian state' which, although taking different forms depending on the issues at stake, aims at the instrumentalization of the industrial relations systems as a major adjustment variable in the crisis. In both cases, either management-led social dialogue implemented by the French multinational corporations or new forms of state intervention, unions have difficulties to develop their own strategies and tend to be marginalized.

The article by Thomas Prosser on the implementation of the European framework agreements on telework and work-related stress in the UK and Denmark addresses the issue of European regulation from a completely different angle. In his article he addresses two fundamental questions: first, whether the non-legally binding implementation mechanism via 'national procedures and

practices' which was chosen for the two agreements represents a viable alternative to the legally binding implementation mechanism via EU directives; and secondly, whether the two agreements added regulatory value to the national industrial relations systems in Denmark and the UK. For both questions the author offers a fairly pessimistic assessment. Prosser argues that the efficiency of the implementation via national procedures and practices was limited, either because there was no tradition of sectoral social dialogue at national level (UK) or because the national social partners could not agree on what constitutes the appropriate national procedure to be chosen for the issue in question (Denmark). He furthermore finds that in terms of content, neither of the European framework agreements had a substantial impact at national level, because the social partners of both countries were of the opinion that both topics were already sufficiently covered by existing regulation.

The sixth article by Anne Mette Ødegård, Øyvind Berge and Kristin Alsos explores the use of temporary work agencies in the Norwegian construction sector. The main focus of the contribution is on the operation of the hiring companies and their treatment of their employees. The article sheds light on the growing activities of 'disreputable' temporary working agencies in the construction sector, which together with the large influx of workers from the new EU Member States following the EU enlargement rounds of 2004 and 2007, has resulted in more informal and undeclared business activities; these are in turn associated with low wages, poor working conditions and the failure to comply with employment and tax regulations. The authors furthermore demonstrate that the various national and European regulatory measures introduced to prevent the activities of 'disreputable' temporary work agencies have achieved little improvement because the companies in question were able to find ways to circumvent these rules. Against this background, the authors argue that the most promising solution to the problem of disreputable temporary work agencies is to overcome the lack of unionization in the sector.

The article that differs markedly from the others, both in terms of method and in terms of content, is that by Chiara Paola Donegani and Stephen McKay. In their quantitative analysis, Donegani and McKay challenge one of the most robust findings in the labour economics literature: that unionized workers express a lower degree of job satisfaction than otherwise comparable non-union workers. Most of the previous statistical analyses of the relationship between union membership and job satisfaction were based on data from the US and the UK. The authors extended the empirical basis to a wider range of 18 European countries using the large-scale European Social Survey of 2006 and 2010. On this basis, the authors found that the supposedly robust statistical association between lower job satisfaction and union membership cannot be confirmed for most of the European countries included in their analysis. On the contrary, even after controlling for individual, job and workforce differences by way of regression models, the authors found that union membership is generally associated with higher job satisfaction. The key challenge for future research therefore is not so much the technical refinement of the tools to unravel the apparent paradox of lower job satisfaction among union members, but rather the investigation of the different conditions under which union members express lower or higher job satisfaction. We hope that these new findings can spur a fruitful debate in the labour economics and industrial relations research community.

In the News and Background Section, Andrea Scafidi and Leonardo Scimmi discuss recent initiatives to reform the Italian system of corporate governance, and Frederic Speidel analyses the contribution of the so-called 'Volkswagen law' to the well-developed system of transnational employee interest representation and trade union coordination at Volkswagen.