

EDITORIAL

This second non-thematic issue of Transfer publishes a selection of articles on a range of subjects of current relevance to trade unions and academics.

Across the world, trade union membership is declining and trade unions are studying strategies to attract, as well as retain, members. In the first article, Hans Björkman examines union recruitment strategies based on targeting the needs of individual members or specific member groups. A major Swedish union, Sif, has developed just such a strategy to overcome problems in attracting young and well-educated members. The article reports on this strategy and sets out possible union strategies for developing services and recruitment activities targeting individuals and specific groups of employees.

The second article analyses the impact of the peer review programme of the European Employment Strategy. The peer review programme aims to identify and evaluate good practices by Member States and to promote their transferability within the EU. On the basis of specific examples, Florence Lesfresne examines whether it is possible to isolate a good practice in one country and transpose it to another. Because each Member State chooses which of its practices are to be reviewed as a good practice, the article also examines to what extent Member States attempt to use the programme to legitimise their own employment policies.

In the third article Rosa Nonell, Ramón Alós-Moner, Antonio Martín Artiles and Joaquín Molins analyse the concept of the governability of collective bargaining as proposed by Traxler, Blaschke and Kittel (2001). Based on the results of their recent research into collective bargaining in Spain, the authors examine the explanatory capacity and the limits of this concept when applied to Spain. They argue that, in spite of the organisational weakness of the unions and the employers' associations, the Spanish collective bargaining system is governable owing to the role of the state, institutions and legal order, as well as tradition.

Mikkel Mailand's article on 'Dynamic neo-corporatism – regulating work and welfare in Denmark' argues that corporatism continues to play a role in Danish labour market and welfare state regulation. This is mainly in the form of the social partners participating in policy formulation and being involved in policy implementation. His examination of the interaction between the Danish state and social partners in the areas of pensions, activation, continuous training and maternity/paternity leave lead him to conclude that the 'grey' unclear zone of activity between the state and the social partners has been extended.

Through its relatively generous maternity/paternity leave and other policies Denmark comes closer to permitting workers to achieve a work-life balance than many European countries, including Spain. In recent years increasing numbers of women have entered the labour market and men and women often struggle to attain a work-life balance. This problem is compounded when workers are asked to work increasingly flexible hours. On the basis of research carried out in the factory of a multinational in Spain, Carlos Lozares and Faustino Miguélez examine this new situation being faced by workers and the strategies being adopted by workers in the face of the increasing flexibility of working life as compared to the increasing inflexibility of time off work.

With reference to the influential Varieties of Capitalism thesis (Hall and Soskice 2001), Phil Almond and Maria Gonzalez Menendez analyse the relationship between financial and labour market systems. They find that it is not necessarily the case that different employment policies are conducive to economic success in each of the two forms of capitalism described by Hall and Soskice: liberal market economies and coordinated market economies. The authors argue that the room available for political choice in individual elements of national political systems, including employment, is larger than suggested by the Varieties of Capitalism argument.

Like the first article, the seventh and final main article has as its starting point the crisis in union membership and interest representation. It considers how unions can continue to foster solidarity in the rapidly changing world of employment and production. Mirella Baglioni argues that unions should strive for solidarity through new forms of social and wage regulation. She examines new negotiation practices – carried out through social partnership – that allow for employee representation and protection at the workplace while including both the insiders and the outsiders.

The next non-thematic issue of Transfer will be published in a year's time (end-September 2007). We welcome submissions of articles whose subject matter falls within the aims and scope of Transfer. Please see the inside back cover of this issue and the website for guidelines on submitting an article to Transfer.

Meanwhile, on 5 October 2006 we will be holding a conference to celebrate the 12th anniversary of the founding of Transfer. The conference has as its theme 'The future of the European social model. The role of the unions', and will be addressed by speakers from both the trade union and the academic worlds. We plan to publish a full report on the conference in the next issue of Transfer. This special issue will have relocation as its theme.

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