Chapter 29

Conclusion: Trade Unions picking up the pieces from the neoliberal challenge

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For about the past forty years trade unions in the European Union (EU) have had to cope with a neoliberal agenda that has challenged their organizational strength and restricted their capacity to act. This neoliberal agenda, pursued by employers and policymakers at national and European level, has been much more than merely a macroeconomic policy programme involving trade liberalization, fiscal discipline and inflation control at the expense of full employment. It has been a broader political programme, cutting across different policy areas, ostensibly to free markets from what the proponents of this programme saw as unduly bureaucratic political and corporatist control (Streeck 2013: 55). From this perspective trade unions, collective bargaining and other forms of joint regulation by collective actors are perceived as institutional ‘rigidities’ that obstruct the functioning of free markets and employers’ discretion (Baccaro and Howell 2017; Gamble 2014). As a consequence, a range of structural reforms and policies were enacted that have negatively affected the unions’ capacity to act.

Chapter 1 outlined the range of measures representing the ‘neoliberal challenge’ and their consequences for trade union organization and activities. In order to review trade union responses to these challenges it is important to recall three key elements of this challenge at this juncture. First, the reduction of the role and size of the state, as both a regulator and an employer. The liberalization and privatization of large parts of public services have led to a significant shrinking of public sector employment, which traditionally is a stronghold of unionization. Second, labour
market reforms were designed to increase flexibility. This has involved measures to reduce employment protection and to boost low-wage and atypical employment, linked to fissured workplaces (Weil 2014), coupled with the decentralization and, in some instances, de-unionization of collective bargaining and wage-setting. Third, a general distancing of the state and political parties from union involvement in policymaking: for instance, by dismantling or downgrading the significance of tripartite arrangements for policy formulation, albeit to different degrees in different Member States (Ebbinghaus and Weishaupt 2021).

Trade unions have received little help from Europe. On the contrary, from the outset the asymmetry between market-creating and market-correcting measures has been a defining characteristic of the European integration process, which prompted Streeck to call the EU a ‘liberalization machine’ (2013: 148). The European-level push for neoliberal structural reforms reached its highpoint with the establishment of the new system of economic governance that began to emerge in 2010 in the wake of the management of the Great Recession of 2007–2009. The reforms pushed for in the context of the European Semester and by the Troika (comprising the European Commission, the European Central Bank and the International Monetary Fund) represented a ‘new European interventionism’ (Schulten and Müller 2013), which aimed at ‘an overall reduction in the wage-setting power of trade unions’ (European Commission 2012: 104). Only recently have there been signs of a more union-friendly shift in European-level discourse, acknowledging the importance of strong labour and social systems for economic development and political stability (Schulten and Müller 2021). This shift in discourse has found concrete expression in, for instance, the adoption of the European Pillar of Social Rights in 2017 and more recently, in autumn 2022, in the adoption of the Directive on adequate minimum wages in the EU. It remains to be seen whether the latter will help to provide a more supportive European-level framework for unions or whether, in light of the crisis caused by the Covid-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine, there will be a return to neoliberal supply-side approaches.

While trade unions in all EU countries have had to cope with these neoliberal challenges, their impact on the unions’ organizational strength and their capacity to act have differed markedly between Member States. This can be traced to three factors. First, in terms of the structural environment the extent of the neoliberal challenges varies markedly between countries (Baccaro and Howell 2017; Bohle and Grescovits 2012; Dølvik
and Martin 2014). Exemplary of this variation is the impact of the management of the Great Recession on collective bargaining, which ranged from a ‘frontal assault’ (Marginson 2015) in the countries subjected to the measures prescribed by the Troika, to incremental adaptations in the Nordic countries, which aimed principally at stabilizing rather than undermining existing bargaining arrangements (Dølvik and Marginson 2018).

Second, the impact also depends on the state of trade unionism. The country chapters illustrate that unions in the various countries differ significantly in their capacity to resist the neoliberal challenge. Influencing their capacity to resist the neoliberal challenge were union differences in organizational strength – union density – (Vandaele 2019) and financial and material resources. Furthermore, trade unions’ embeddedness in the existing institutional framework provided them with different opportunity structures to influence policymaking at national level. The handling of the Great Recession once again is instructive in this respect. Two different developmental paths can be distinguished (Bieling 2013): one path was followed by countries belonging to the model of Nordic corporatism or the continental European model of social partnership, for instance Austria and Germany, which enabled unions to cushion and moderate the crisis through ‘crisis corporatism’ (Urban 2015). This means that the trade unions had access to policymaking and were actively involved in crisis management. In the countries of southern Europe and throughout much of Central and Eastern Europe (CEE), however, such a crisis-corporatist path was blocked because institutional access to policymaking never existed or has been further weakened by the management of the crisis (Glassner 2013).

Third, and closely associated with the second point, is the absence of a viable counter-narrative to neoliberalism from within left-of-centre European political parties (Coates 2007; Glyn 2001; Haugsgjerd and Bale 2017). This is compounded by the absence, with the arguable exception of the Nordic countries, of a consensus, or even a shared view, regarding the relationship between left-of-centre parties and trade unions. In combination, points two and three reduce trade unions’ capacity to secure support for preferred policy choices within Member States, suggesting that most trade unions are unable to rely on political allies to implement legislation that will externally support trade union renewal. As a consequence of the variation in both the extent of the neoliberal challenge and the unions’ resilience, over time the existing divergence in European industrial relations, more generally, and the unions’ capacity to act, more
specifically, increased even further (Dølvik and Marginson 2018; Müller and Platzer 2016).

Against this background, this Conclusion reviews the range of trade union actions implemented to meet the challenges arising from neoliberalism. It comprises four sections. The first section focuses on trade union renewal within the Member States. It engages with unionization but also issues of union structure, democracy, resources and finance in order to map the measures taken within unions to improve their organizational strength. The second section examines and analyses the unions’ interaction with external actors: potential members, employers and the state, and civil society organizations. The third section addresses activities at European level, while the fourth section reviews the responses of our country experts to Visser’s (2019) categories and speculates on future developments. It is acknowledged that trade union actions at and within Member State and European levels may be interconnected. Treating each level and action in a separate section, however, facilitates explanation and identification of the parameters that influence renewal. (Unless otherwise specified, all country references in the Conclusion refer to the country chapters.)

**Trade union renewal**

Although myriad challenges are facing trade unions within the EU, trade unionists retain some discretion in the countermeasures they implement to adapt to changed circumstances. The range of union countermeasures aimed at renewing or revitalizing their organization is vast and includes innovative experiments intended to equip unions with a membership, agenda and organization ‘fit’ to meet the neoliberal challenge (Bernaciak and Kahancová 2017a; Frege and Kelly 2004). To a degree, these experiments are contingent on national circumstances, particularly the degree of trade union institutional embeddedness. Hence the reliance in this publication on country chapters to elaborate them in detail. It is useful at this juncture, however, to review the range of union countermeasures to illustrate some of the principal features of trade union renewal. To this end recruiting and organizing new members, restructuring representation, servicing and organizing, and trade union finance are discussed. It is acknowledged from the outset that there are overlaps between these categories.
Recruiting and organizing new members

Many unions implement organizing campaigns with the intention of bringing new groups of workers into membership, known as ‘greenfield organizing’; or attempt to deepen density where unionization is already present, known as ‘brownfield organizing’. Organizing is understood among mainstream unions mainly in terms of recruitment and less so in terms of mobilization, let alone ‘deep organizing’ (Holgate et al. 2018; McAlevey, 2016; Vandaele 2020). Although it is now more than three decades since unions in the United States (US) launched the initial organizing campaigns, the meaning of organization in this sense remains ambiguous and contested. Some argue that organizing constitutes a radical break from union approaches based on the servicing of members and requires a reconceptualization of union operations and activities (Carter 2006). In contrast, others fail to see an absolute separation between organizing and servicing, and view organizing as a campaign tool that can be deployed selectively and directed towards specific short-term targets without a complete overhaul of union operations and objectives (de Turberville 2004; Simms 2012).

It appears that a number of conditions need to be met to engage with the organizing approach. First, it needs to be recognized within a trade union that its membership decline is a problem. In Ghent system countries, for example, the maintenance of relatively high membership levels may explain why trade unions adopted elements of the organizing approach later than other unions. Second, unionists need to recognize that the organizing approach is the preferred method. In southern Europe other approaches appear preferable: for example, in France union legitimacy is based on a ‘unionism of activism’ rather than mass membership (Sullivan 2009), whereas in Spain the elections of workplace representatives and works councils act as a focus for renewal (Martinez Lucio 2017). Third, the organizing approach requires the reallocation of resources or generation of new resources. Many trade unions in the EU16 are in a position to reallocate resources, whereas their counterparts in the EU11 tend to be more reliant on resources transferred for unions in the EU16, the ETUFs or EU project money for capacity building.

What is clear is that organizing requires a skill set that was not initially available among a sufficient number of full-time trade union officers to sustain long-term organizing campaigns. In consequence, several unions, primarily from Anglophone countries, set up organizing academies,
introduced organizing skills sessions into training programmes and, in some instances, established networks of organizers to drive campaigns forward (Heery et al. 2000; Simms et al. 2013). It is also apparent that the appointment or election of senior unionists with a commitment to organizing underpins most organizing campaigns. The election of Detlev Wetzel as Erster Vorsitzender (President) of the Metalworkers’ Union (IGM, Industriegewerkschaft Metall) in Germany, for example, resulted from his success in promoting organizing in North Rhine Westphalia, where he was the Bezirksleiter (Regional Secretary), and resulted in an intensification of organizing activities within the union as a whole (Schmalz and Thiel 2017). Accompanying a commitment on the part of senior unionists is intensive activity within the locality of the organizing campaign to promote union organization and to build cadres of activists (Arnholtz et al. 2016; Connolly et al. 2017). Similarly, organizing techniques need to vary from industry to industry within countries, as well as between countries if membership gains are to be made (Mrozowicki 2014; Mundlak 2020; Simms and Holgate 2010).

Superficially, there appears to be a convergence in union responses to membership decline through the organizing approach (Ibsen and Tapia 2017). The country chapters, however, illustrate huge variation in the form of organizing campaigns, and also its limited spread throughout the EU. Among these variations three features appear in many organizing campaigns, albeit in different forms: the head office or central identification of target groups of potential members; the allocation of resources to identify issues relevant to the target group at the place of work, coupled with the deployment of organizers; and the recruitment of new members, together with the identification of grassroots worker leaders who might increase the likelihood of the new group of members becoming self-sustaining within the union (McAlevey 2016). US-based research demonstrates that the success of organizing depends on the range and intensity of practices deployed during the campaign (Bronfenbrenner and Hickey 2004), confirming a requirement for specific organizing resources, strategic planning and member mobilization (Fletcher and Hurd 2001). Similarly organizing requires unions to identify the concerns of potential members and establish a connection between these concerns and the union (Connolly et al. 2017; Knotter 2017). It should be noted, however, that the split between the American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO) and the Change to Win trade unions in 2005 did not result in a statistically significant
improvement in performance among the Change to Win trade unions, although they employed more organizing practices (Aleks 2015).\footnote{In 2005 seven trade unions split from the AFL-CIO to form a new union confederation called ‘Change to Win’. The Change to Win unions argued that insufficient resources were allocated to organizing within AFL-CIO. The split was thus intended to ensure that organizing was prioritized to a greater extent within Change to Win. Analysis of ten years of data from the Labor Relations Board and the National Mediation Board shows that the effect of Change to Win policies on whether a union won a certification election and the number or percentage of workers successfully organized was not statistically significant (Aleks 2015). In short, the implementation of organizing practices by Change to Win trade unions did not improve organizing performance.}

In terms of aggregate national membership, organizing has at best merely slowed the rate of decline in union density. Specific unions, however, have recorded membership increases or membership stability as a result of deploying additional resources to organizing (Holgate et al. 2018; Pernicka and Aust 2007; Wetzel et al. 2013). The most likely targets of organizing campaigns are private sector services; women, young and migrant workers; and those employed in low quality precarious jobs, reflecting both current union organizational weaknesses and segments of growing employment (Martinez Lucio et al. 2017; Pulignano et al. 2016; Simms 2017). The central theme is to extend union organization to previously neglected segments of the labour force. The exceptions to this general observation are often the result of industrial union organization, which may limit the possible targets for organizing. In Germany, IGM, for example, has attempted to organize workers employed in the growing wind turbine segment of the metals industry: that is, workers in companies building new products. It has also tried to extend organization among white-collar workers within the metal industry from its largely blue-collar base, and is campaigning to organize workers subcontracted by engineering companies at which the union has members (Nicklich and Helfen 2019). In practice, IGM primarily campaigns to heighten density within the metal industry. The case of the Construction-Agriculture-Environment Union (IGBAU, \textit{Industriegewerkschaft Bauen-Agrar-Umwelt}), however, demonstrates that industrial organization need not be an impermeable barrier to organizing in that, from a traditional membership in construction and agriculture, IGBAU has sustained a long-term campaign to organize cleaners in some large German cities, demonstrating that greenfield organizing is possible.
Irrespective of the chosen targets, organizing requires a shift of resources within trade unions to fund and sustain campaigns. This shift has created tensions within unions between those with a servicing background and brief, and the beneficiaries of additional resources engaged in organizing (Simms et al. 2013). The shift in resources has, in some instances, also created an imperative to secure additional members to compensate for the funds allocated to organizing. Financial difficulties have arisen where insufficient additional members are organized to compensate for the costs. In the Netherlands, for example, the Dutch Trade Union Federation (FNV, *Federatie Nederlandse Vakbewegung*) proposed to lay off 400 of 2,000 union employees because of such financial problems in 2018 (Winkel 2018). Differences in commitment to organizing may also result in political disputes between unions. While in the EU there has been nothing comparable to the split within the AFL-CIO between the Change to Win trade unions, which advocated organizing, and other affiliates (Estreicher 2006), the reluctance of some unions to embrace organizing is concurrent with the emergence of ‘radical unions’ and grassroots movements in France and Poland, which make a space for participation and self-organization for groups of workers reluctant to participate in more traditional or mainstream trade unions (Denis 2012; Mathers 2017; Mrozowicki and Maciejewska 2017). Overall, however, ‘radical unions’ are in the minority and currently are limited to a few European countries (Connolly et al. 2014), although their tactics and strategies towards precarious and vulnerable workers may inspire mainstream unions (Però 2020; Vandaele 2021)

As the country chapters make clear, there are very different approaches to organizing within and between unions. The country chapters highlight the merits and limitations of this variation and explain why some unions have not engaged in organizing. Key to the variation in organizing strategies are the terms of the national social model and union strategies. Where periodic elections are required for works councillors, for example in Belgium (Vandaele 2020), Germany (Behrens 2009) and Spain (Martinez Lucio 2017), unions campaign in workplaces for votes, which raises their profile and may attract new members. Elsewhere, under different institutional circumstances, ‘leverage’ has been used to reveal a company’s vulnerabilities, which may be exploited to promote union

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2 As a result of strike action the number of proposed redundancies was reduced to 250.
organization (Ramesh 2021). Where trade unions are based on company or other restricted scopes of organization, resources and expertise are rarely available in sufficient quantities to implement wide-ranging organizing campaigns. In most of these instances organizing campaigns do not take place. In a limited number of such cases in CEE, support from European Trade Union Federations (ETUFs) and individual national unions based in western Europe in the form of resources and expertise have sustained organizing campaigns.

**Restructuring representation**

A second core area of union renewal concerns the restructuring of representation. As with organizing there is a huge variation within and between trade union movements. In this context union mergers, union democracy and shifts in the relationship between servicing and organizing within unions figure large.

**Mergers**

Throughout much of Europe, and linked to membership decline, is union structural change by means of mergers. ‘Merger’ is used as a collective term that includes amalgamations, in which two or more unions combine to form a new union; and acquisitions, usually involving a larger union’s absorption of a smaller union (Waddington 2006; Waddington et al. 2005). Mergers take many forms, resulting in no small part from the confederal structure and constitutional power of the confederation(s) within each Member State. In Czechia, Germany and Slovakia, for example, confederations have very little constitutional authority over affiliated trade unions, with the consequence that mergers result from initiatives taken within affiliated trade unions. In contrast, in France, Italy and Spain confederations exert some constitutional authority over the constituent federations. As a result, mergers take place within confederal structures and usually along the lines agreed within the confederation. In Austria and the Netherlands intermediary positions have been established whereby confederations have some authority over affiliated unions, but some mergers and other structural changes have been completed without confederal agreement. Furthermore, in countries with multiple confederations there are instances of mergers between confederations, exemplified recently by mergers between the Danish Confederation of Trade Unions (Landsorganisationen i Danmark, LO) and the Confederation of
Professionals in Denmark (Functionærernes og Tjenestemændenes Fællesråd, FTF) in January 2019 to form the Confederation of Trade Unions (Fagbevægelsens Hovedorganisation, FH), and between the National Confederation of Hungarian Trade Unions (Magyar Szakszervezetek Országos Szövetsége, MSZOSZ) and the Autonomous Trade Union Confederation (Autonóm Szakszervezetek Szövetsége, ASZSZ) to form the Hungarian Trade Union Association (Magyar Szakszervezeti Szövetség, MASZSZ) in December 2013. The extent to which these confederal mergers promote mergers between affiliated unions remains to be seen.

Four further features are associated with the merger process. The first is that where industrial unionism is dominant the impact of membership decline is uneven. Mining, print, leather and textile unions, for example, have disappeared as independent trade unions in many countries as a result of the contraction of employment in these industries. In these circumstances the industrial union structure and attached constitutional arrangements prohibit recruitment beyond the agreed scope of the union, effectively preventing organization in new or expanding segments of the economy. More conglomerate unions with recruitment bases straddling several industries have thus emerged from the merger process (Visser 2012).

A second feature associated with the merger process is the concentration of membership in a few, relatively large trade unions. This raises questions of internal union democracy: how are members from different industries represented within post-merger trade unions? Similarly, the concentration of membership within fewer trade unions brings into question the relationship between confederations and affiliated trade unions. In many confederations, for example, decision-making is a function of votes taken by affiliates, which, in turn, is dependent on membership size. The concentration of membership into fewer unions has thus resulted in cases where very few affiliated unions can determine the policy of the confederation and calls into question the utility of confederal affiliation to the smaller trade unions, which can exert very little influence over policy direction. As noted in the country chapters, approaches to this dilemma vary. An exceptional example is the Dutch FNV, in which the two largest unions FNV Bondgenoten and Abvakabo FNV came to represent about two-thirds of affiliated membership. Following a merger involving these two unions and several smaller FNV affiliates the resultant ‘one big union’ agreed to its division into twenty-three sectors, each with industrial, occupational, gender or age interests. In short, the pre-merger
size of *FNV Bondgenoten* and *AbvaKabo FNV* necessitated radical restructuring to sustain confederal democracy.

A third feature associated with the merger process concerns the extent to which mergers are defensive or strategic. Continuing a long-standing pattern (Waddington 2006), the majority of recent mergers are defensive: unions may incur membership losses or financial pressures, or become subject to some other adverse event, as a consequence of which they seek a merger. In these circumstances the choice of merger partner may be influenced by the terms of the offers received rather than any ‘industrial logic’. Where industrial bargaining is in place both or all pre-merger unions usually retain a degree of bargaining autonomy. It should be noted that in many defensive mergers post-merger restructuring results in reductions in the number of union employees and the rationalization of administrative units in attempts to cut post-merger costs. Much more infrequent are mergers with an unambiguous strategic intent, usually defined by reference to industrial or political circumstances. In Germany the merger to form the United Services Union (ver.di, *Vereinte Dienstleistungsgewerkschaft*) in 2001 combined almost all public and private services sector unionists,\(^3\) while in Spain the General Union of Workers (UGT, *Unión General de Trabajadores*) reorganized its federal structure to comprise three main federations with responsibilities in public services, private sector services, and industry, construction and agriculture, respectively. The General Federation of Belgian Labour (ABVV/FGTB, *Algemeen Belgisch Vakverbond/ Fédération Générale du travail de Belgique*), with seven affiliates today, is also slowly moving in this direction.

A fourth feature arising from the merger process is not universal, but not uncommon either, and concerns relations between the post-merger union and members. The services to members provided by post-merger unions are comparable with those provided by the pre-merger unions (Baraldi et al. 2010; Behrens and Pekarek 2012). In some circumstances it is questionable, however, whether mergers promote renewal. In the Danish context, for example, shop stewards belonging to acquired unions are less likely to contact the headquarters of the post-merger union about

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\(^3\) Two unions did not participate in the ver.di merger. They organize workers in the services sector: *Gewerkschaft Nahrung-Genuss-Gaststätten* (NGG, Food, Beverage and Catering Union) and *Gewerkschaft Erziehung und Wissenschaft* (GEW, Education and Science Union).
organizing activities than their counterparts in non-merged unions (Navrbjerg and Larsen 2018). This confirms that the re-establishment of working relationships in post-merger unions is a time-consuming process and may inhibit development within post-merger unions (Waddington 2006).

*Union democracy*

A further element of restructuring representation linked to changing union membership composition is exemplified by the increasing diversity of union membership, resulting from both mergers and labour market change. This process raises issues of representation within trade unions. Traditional approaches to union democracy were geographical and vertical in orientation, insofar as the region or industry was treated as the basic unit of democratic organization (Edelstein and Warner 1975; Webb and Webb 1897). The merger process resulted in a range of sections, trade groups and *Fachbereiche* within trade unions to accommodate the increasing range of industries in which members worked, but a basic unit of internal union democracy remained vertical. Such representative structures take little or no account of variation among the membership: sex and age, for example, were downplayed by comparison with industry. To adjust to the changing membership composition, a range of horizontal structures have been introduced, designed to bring together members with particular, often personal, characteristics. These horizontal structures supplement geographical and vertical forms of representation. Such horizontal structures allow, for example, the representation of women, young workers, unemployed workers, retired workers, workers with specific sexual orientations or gender identities, and workers with different ethnic origins, irrespective of their geographical or industrial location of employment (McBride 2001; Hodder and Kretsos 2015; Humphrey 2002). In some instances, these developments have been linked to systems of proportional representation whereby the composition of a committee is proportional to the composition of the membership represented by the committee: if 60 per cent of the membership is female, for example, women make up 60 per cent of the committee representing that membership (Terry 1996). In short, internal representative structures have become more complex and often more expensive in many unions to accommodate diversity within the membership.
Conclusion: picking up the pieces

Servicing and organizing

A third element of restructuring representation is directly related to organizing and concerns whether, or the extent to which, organizing displaces servicing as the principal union purpose. While organizing is unlikely to completely overwhelm the servicing function, it is commonplace for the relationship between the two functions within unions to change fundamentally. Within the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) in the United States, the stated intention of Andy Stern, the President elected in 2007, was to spend half the budget on organizing, although in 2020, 28.2 per cent of the budget of $255 million was spent on organizing Americans for Fair Treatment (Americans for Fair Treatment 2022). The extent of the commitment to organizing within the SEIU is rarely replicated. Unions have introduced measures to mainstream or routinize organizing within their repertoire of activity (Simms et al. 2013) by adapting, reformulating and selectively using the organizing approach (Czarzasty et al. 2014; Geary and Gamwell 2019; Krzywdzinski 2010; Nicklich and Helfen 2019; Thomas 2016). Similarly, the establishment of organizing and leverage departments, often with direct access to senior union policymakers, coupled with teams of organizers that may be deployed anywhere within the union’s remit are features of many unions as they commit to organizing. The point here is that unions’ internal activities and the deployment of staff and resources have been restructured in unions that have committed to organizing: in part, the extent of this restructuring reflects the extent of the commitment to organizing.

Trade union finance

It is noteworthy that issues associated with the reform of systems of union financial management rarely appear in the renewal literature, yet union finances impinge on unions’ capacity to campaign, deliver support to members and ensure member representation. In France, for example,

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The same sources report that the SEIU spends 28.2 per cent of its budget on organizing compared with 19.4 per cent on political activities and lobbying; 13.9 per cent on investments and fixed assets; 11.5 per cent on member support; 11.0 per cent on general overheads; 6.3 per cent on benefits; 4.4 per cent on union administration; 1.8 per cent on per capita tax; 1.8 per cent on direct taxes; 0.9 per cent on contributions, gifts and grants; and 0.8 per cent on other expenses.
union management remains archaic, with damaging consequences for the collection of membership subscriptions and resource allocation within unions (Andolfatto and Labbé 2008). Elsewhere, some unions are subject to ‘cost disease pressures’; in other words, costs rising at a faster rate than inflation, at least before 2021, in part as a result of issues associated with the management of collective action organizations (Willman et al. 2020). It is likely that increasing heterogeneity of membership and their representation will increase internal costs further. The country chapters indicate two key trends regarding union finance.

First, membership contributions remain a significant source of union income in all Member States. Membership decline or stagnation, however, is not necessarily associated with financial difficulties. Unions, particularly those in the EU16, have been able to raise membership fees, at least, to partially compensate for membership losses. Membership decline has been particularly financially damaging in two circumstances: where unions are small and where industrial union organization prevails. Where unions are small – such as company unions in the EU11 – membership decline may undermine them. As many of these unions are unable to support the employment of a full-time union official, resources to reverse membership decline are often absent. Where industrial union organization is still present, unions in declining industries sustain membership losses and financial difficulties because they are unable to extend organization into expanding segments of the economy where other unions have established recruitment bases. In these circumstances many of the declining industrial unions have sought a merger.

A second point emerging from the country chapters regarding union finance concerns the differences between the EU16 and EU11. In general terms, trade unions based in the EU16 tend to be more financially robust than their counterparts in the EU11. In part, this is because of the long-term accumulation of reserves and assets, and their relative size, which spreads the risk of membership decline over a wider area of the labour market. In contrast, many of the small company-based unions operating within the EU11 have neither accumulated reserves nor assets on which to draw to mitigate the impact of financial downturns. Such company unions also often do not have the capacity to recruit elsewhere and thus spread the risk of membership decline more widely. Although EU11 unions have access to funds from the sale and rent of property ‘inherited’ from the pre-1990 period, these funds tend to be at the disposal of confederations rather than workplace unions. Campaigning by
unions in the EU11 is also supported by the transfer of funds from trade union organizations based in the EU16 and EU project funding intended to build capacity.

**New services and servicing techniques**

Within the financial constraints arising from membership decline, union renewal has seen the introduction of packages of financial services embracing, among other things, discounted insurance, health care and holidays intended to attract newly individualized potential members and to retain existing members. Some unions have claimed that members subscribing to these services can recoup the costs of their membership contributions. The costs to the unions of these financial services are marginal, as the service provider meets the costs of marketing (TUC 1988; Bassett and Cave 1993). Survey evidence from fourteen European countries, however, indicates that packages of financial services are of little attraction to members compared with ‘traditional’ trade union services of support at work and improved pay and conditions (Waddington 2014).

A further area of union innovation concerns the delivery of services. In several instances innovations are linked to organizing insofar as organizing required communications with members and potential members and surveys to ascertain the issues around which a campaign might be developed. The internet and social media were often used to conduct these communications and research. In addition to this relatively narrow usage the same tools are now envisaged as a means to communicate in real time during industrial disputes, to transform the practice of industrial democracy, to improve service delivery, and to introduce new forms of member engagement (Clark 2000: 106–124; Shostack 1991: 101–124). Subsequently gathered European evidence confirms that internet and social media tools have assisted organizing campaigns (Fitzgerald et al. 2012), membership involvement (Kerr and Waddington 2014), generating international solidarity (Martinez Lucio et al. 2017), union networking (Martinez Lucio and Stuart 2009), and the conduct of industrial disputes (Rego et al. 2016). The country chapters, however, show that there tend to be gaps between actual membership and members’ engagement with the internet and social media. A particularly innovative illustration of the use of the internet and social media is ver.di’s Mediafon initiative, designed to organize the self-employed (Haake 2017). This initiative of almost twenty years’ standing uses electronic media to maintain
contact with self-employed union members, many of whom have no stable workplace and may work at a number of locations during a given period. Where support and advice are requested by self-employed members it is dispensed via access to experts employed by ver.di in the relevant area of the member’s concern. Other union organizations in Belgium, France, Italy and Spain have implemented the principles underpinning this approach to support solo self-employed workers and freelancers, including, on occasion, platform workers (Vandaele 2021).

A new policy agenda

Changes in the labour market and unions’ political positions have promoted revisions of the union agenda and the means of its implementation. In particular, attention is now directed towards bringing workers previously outside unions into membership. Unions have thus introduced policies appropriate for these groups. Trade unions have also sought to establish new relationships with employers, the state and campaigning civil society organizations, and to set a union agenda on topical issues. These elements of a new policy agenda are outlined here to further illustrate the range of policy options being pursued by unions within the EU.

Policies towards potential members

Policies intended to protect: workers in precarious employment or in private sector services; young, migrant, and agency workers; black, Asian and minority ethnic workers; those on low pay; and workers in the ‘gig’ or platform economy are now found in various forms throughout Europe. In several cases the introduction of such policies represented a marked change in union approach. Precarious and migrant workers, for example, were initially viewed as outsiders, and unions acted to defend the interests of existing members. The policy shift to defend the ‘new’ groups of workers thus represents a shift from defending ‘vested interests’ to acting as a ‘sword of justice’ (Flanders 1970). Similarly, the introduction of statutory minimum wages in Germany (2015) was the result of long-running campaigns by unions with members concentrated in services, which eventually persuaded unions with memberships in manufacturing to support the introduction of a statutory minimum wage (Bruttel et al. 2018).
While organizing looms large in many of the policy initiatives directed towards workers previously regarded as outsiders, it is by no means the only policy approach employed. Trade unions have pressured employers with unionized workforces to set minimum standards for the employment of agency and outsourced work; have cooperated with regulatory bodies, such as labour inspectorates, in an attempt to enforce existing standards; have lobbied governments to regulate more robustly; and have campaigned for improved training and skill acquisition opportunities (Burgess et al. 2013; Doellgast et al. 2018; Heery and Abbott 2000). Many of these initiatives rely on existing industrial relations institutions and practices to facilitate campaigns.

Examples of union policies on migrant and young workers illustrate the breadth of the initiatives launched. Reference to the notion that unions are positioned differently in Member States with reference to markets, society and class (Hyman 2001) enables Connolly et al. (2017) to demonstrate that Spanish unions have tended to coalesce between class and social rights in using state resources and social services to further the interests of migrants, while in the Netherlands social rights and ethnicity guided union policy, integral to which was the promotion of a greater sensitivity to ethnic communities within social dialogue. Examination of the approaches to migrant workers among Italian unions also illustrates a strong commitment to organizational change and the representation of migrant workers’ specific interests (Marino 2012). All of these initiatives remain national in orientation. Attempts by IGBAU to establish the European Migrant Workers’ Union (EMWU) – an international union for migrant workers – with the intention of establishing branches in several European countries came to nothing as national unions defended their vested interests within the nation-state rather than cede authority to the EMWU (Greer et al. 2013).\(^5\)

Although demand for union membership has been persistently high from young workers across the EU (Caraker et al. 2015; Turner and D’Art 2012; Vendramin 2007), young workers have very limited knowledge of unions (Fernández Rodríguez et al. 2015; Hodder 2019). Furthermore, young and older workers are less likely to be unionized than those in their forties and fifties (Blanchflower 2007; Blanchflower and Bryson 2020), while inter-generational unionization rates appeared to widen between

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\(^5\) This initiative is discussed below in the context of transnational developments.
2004 and 2014, with increases in the median age of union members in most Member States (Vandaele 2018, 2019). In these circumstances it is thus not surprising that unions have launched a wide range of initiatives intended to bring more young workers into membership.

To this end unions have intensified the following: the use of outreach activities, including visits to schools, higher education institutions and job fairs; the availability of information on the social rights of young workers; links between unions and youth organizations; and campaigning on issues important to young people, such as the removal of the youth rate in national minimum wage schemes and reductions in the period of work before access to benefits is allowed (Hodder and Houghton 2015; Tapia and Turner 2018; Vandaele 2018). In addition, unions have ‘tailored’ their messaging thorough the use of internet and social media (Geelan 2015). Within unions, representative structures exclusively for young members have been established, and reduced membership contributions or free membership schemes are now commonplace (Vandaele 2012). The various measures directed specifically at young workers ensure that they continue to join unions, but the widening of inter-generational unionization rates (Vandaele 2018, 2019) and the overall decline in unionization rates demonstrate that young workers are not joining in sufficient numbers to replace older members that are leaving unions.

A further element of a new policy agenda concerns union agenda setting on topical issues, such as digitalization, low carbon economy, the platform economy and family-friendly policies. Again, the country chapters illustrate considerable variation in these initiatives as regards whether they are pursued and, if so, at what intensity and how. Among the factors that influence these policies are the industrial location and gender composition of the membership, coupled with the union’s organizing intentions. Unions with significant membership employed in nuclear energy production, for example, are unlikely to campaign vigorously for the dismantling of nuclear power stations. It should also be acknowledged that different unions and trade unionists highlight different aspects of these topical issues. German unions emphasize issues of control and surveillance in the context of digitalization, whereas workplace representatives highlight the risks of job losses and downgraded wages and

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6 Only in Austria, Hungary and Italy did the median age of trade unionists decline between 2004 and 2014.
working conditions (Ilsøe 2017). Elsewhere, gender inequalities, job security, skill degradation, and the distribution of productivity gains arising from digitalization have been brought to the fore (Drahokoupil and Vandaele 2021). The key point here is that unions are developing and implementing policies on topical issues. The country chapters demonstrate that these policy processes are uneven in their development and have been directed towards different objectives, contingent on national circumstances. Although several of these topical issues are international in coverage and effect, it is also apparent that national trade union initiatives, rather than a coordinated transnational response, loom large in the union response.

**External relations: employers, the state and civil society**

Revitalizing organizational strength is essential for unions’ external relations in terms of their capacity to regulate the employment relationship in interactions with employers, policymakers and civil society. Union organizational strength in respect of union density and the capacity to mobilize members, however, is only one factor that determines the outcome of these interaction processes. Other important factors include broader institutional arrangements comprising the specific shape of labour law, the collective bargaining system, the system of company-level employee participation, the welfare state and trade union access to political decision-making processes more generally. These institutional arrangements are the result of previous interaction processes and struggles between unions, employers and the state and can therefore be seen as institutionalizing the existing balance of power between the actors involved in the regulation of industrial relations (Brinkmann et al. 2008). A further factor that influences unions’ external interaction processes is the ability to influence the public discourse on relevant policy issues and to cooperate and forge alliances with other civil society actors to put pressure on employers and governments. The power resources approach conceptualizes these different dimensions as the interplay between unions’ organizational, institutional and societal power resources (Lehndorff et al. 2017; Schmalz and Dörre 2013). In their interactions with external actors, the unions draw on all three sources of power but the specific mixture of the three depends on the national industrial relations framework and is therefore highly country- and sector-specific.
In order to achieve their objectives, unions use three principal channels or arenas, each characterized by a specific constellation of actors and a country-specific set of rules and practices that either promote or restrict unions’ regulatory capacity (Hyman 2001). The first channel is the system of collective bargaining and company-level structures of employee interest representation. The second channel is the ‘political system’ from the standpoint of the unions’ embeddedness in corporatist and tripartite decision-making arrangements and their links to political parties as allies in the legislative process. Civil society and the broader public constitute the third arena, in which the unions engage in a battle of ideas by successfully trying to set the agenda and to influence public opinion in support of their regulatory interests.

One common trend emerging from all twenty-seven country chapters, albeit to varying degrees, is the attempts by employers and governments to reduce the unions’ regulatory capacity in the first two arenas. In the field of collective bargaining this involves three main processes: first, the employers’ gradual withdrawal from industry-level bargaining or their refusal to enter into such bargaining arrangements in the first place; second, promoting the decentralization of collective bargaining by reducing the regulatory scope of industry-level agreements. This involves measures such as loosening up the favourability principle, allowing for company-level derogations from industry-level agreements, more restrictive criteria for the extension of collective agreements, and converting industry-level agreements into less substantive and specific framework agreements (Müller et al. 2019: 631–632). The third process for reducing unions’ regulatory capacity in the area of collective bargaining is decreasing bargaining security, which includes factors that support the unions’ bargaining role. This involves measures such as introducing more restrictive strike regulations or more restrictive rules on union recognition, for instance, through more restrictive representativeness criteria as a precondition of bargaining or by extending negotiating rights to non-union representation structures (Müller et al. 2019: 635–636).

In the second arena, the ‘political system’, measures to reduce unions’ capacity to influence political decisions include the weakening of their corporatist involvement or changing the nature of existing tripartite arrangements, for instance by reducing their competences, downgrading them from real decision-making bodies to mere consultative structures. This essentially reduces them to what Bernaciak (2017) with reference to the situation in Poland called ‘PR corporatism’. Another measure
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mentioned in the country chapters is the distancing of political parties that formerly served as political allies within the parliamentary system.

Unions’ responses to these challenges vary and are fundamentally influenced by the scale of the attack and their capacity to resist them. This, in turn, depends on the unions’ organizational strength and institutional embeddedness. In other words, unions’ strategies for retaining or restoring their regulatory capacity to act vis-à-vis employers and the state depends on the (perceived) means available to them.

Concerning the unions’ response to these challenges, a general trend that emerges from the country chapters is a shift in the relative importance of the three arenas. While the first two arenas of collective bargaining and political lobbying are still the dominant means of regulating the employment relationship, the unions have considerably increased their engagement in the third arena of the broader public through campaigns, mass mobilization and alliances with other civil society organizations to complement and support their activities in the first two arenas. Expressed in the terminology of the power resources approach: to some extent the unions tried to compensate for their loss of organizational and institutional power resources by increasing their societal power resources. By stepping up their activities in the public sphere the unions tried to restore their capacity to act in the field of collective bargaining and political decision-making. The description of this general trend masks important country- and sector-specific differences in the strategic mix the unions pursued to restore their capacity to act vis-à-vis employers, the state and the broader public. In full awareness of the trade-off between depth and breadth, the following examination summarizes some key elements that emerged from the country chapters.

To restore their capacity to act vis-à-vis employers in the field of collective bargaining the unions, to varying degrees, used all three arenas. The first set of measures refers to attempts to resist the push towards decentralization from within the collective bargaining system; for instance, by regaining some degree of control over the process of decentralization. To retain the regulatory capacity of industry-level agreements, the objective was to ensure a process of ‘organized decentralization’ (Traxler 1995), which guarantees industry-level actors some control over company-level bargaining. For this purpose, unions in several countries accepted arrangements, such as framework agreements or opening clauses, that allow for company-level derogations from industry-level agreements as long as they define the terms under which these derogations can take
place (Ibsen and Keune 2018). These measures, however, presuppose union presence at company or workplace level to ensure sufficient articulation between the two bargaining levels. This strategy of retaining some degree of strength from within, therefore, was largely limited to those countries in which unions still enjoyed some degree of organizational strength and/or institutional support for bargaining security. Examples include Austria, Denmark, Finland, Germany and the Netherlands.

Another measure for retaining the regulatory capacity of industry-level agreements was to circumvent formal changes to the bargaining system in support of decentralization by ensuring the support of employers for industry-level bargaining. Italy and Spain are examples: the unions there managed to encourage some employers to maintain the previous hierarchy of bargaining levels and to refrain from the formal opportunity to opt-out of industry-level agreements (Lehndorff et al. 2017).

A third strategy to restore the capacity to act in the field of collective bargaining was to lobby in the political arena for a more supportive legal framework. In the countries hit hardest by the Great Recession and the corresponding crisis management measures, such as Greece, Portugal, Romania and Spain, this involved a call – albeit with limited success – to reverse the neoliberal reforms that had led to the diminution or even abolition of the previous system of industry-level collective bargaining. Calls for legislative changes to strengthen the collective bargaining system, however, were not limited to the ‘crisis countries’. In Germany, for instance, unions also lobbied for a change in the extension mechanism and the inclusion of a requirement to be covered by a collective agreement among the criteria for public procurement.

The political arena seemed to be the most difficult area for the unions in their efforts to restore their capacity to act from within. With the notable exception of the Nordic states, in most countries unions lost their traditional allies in the political system with the decline of social democratic parties. As a consequence, unions tended to become more pragmatic in their choice of political allies. Furthermore, the unions used of what was left of their institutional embeddedness to engage in corporatist arrangements to deal with economic crises such as the Great Recession and more recently the Covid-19 crisis. The example of Germany illustrates that, irrespective of the substantive results of corporatist crisis management, the simple involvement and addressing of interests that went beyond their core constituency considerably improved unions’ public reputation.
All these attempts to improve their capacity to act vis-à-vis the employers and the state in the area of collective bargaining and the political system were increasingly supplemented and supported by activities in the third arena, civil society. The use of campaigns and mass mobilization to support demands and initiatives in the first two arenas is nothing new in countries such as Belgium, France, Italy, Portugal and Spain, in which the mobilization of the broader public and political strikes are traditionally important elements in the unions’ repertoire of action. But what emerges from the country chapters is a general shift in the relative importance of activities aimed at a stronger engagement in and with civil society in other countries, including Austria, Germany, the Netherlands and Sweden, where this was not a traditional feature of unions’ repertoire.

It should be noted that all these activities to improve unions’ capacity to act in the first two arenas require some degree of organizational strength and institutional support for collective bargaining and lobbying activities. There is a significant difference between the EU16 and the EU11 in this respect. Despite the neoliberal attack on unions’ capacity to act, in most western European countries the unions could still rely on a basic level of organizational strength, institutional support for collective bargaining and involvement in corporatist political decision-making. In most CEE countries the unions operated under much more adverse conditions. In a nutshell, their situation is characterized by low density; a fragmented union movement; limited regulatory capacity of collective bargaining because of decentralized bargaining (with the notable exception of the public sector); low bargaining security and low collective bargaining coverage; and a low level of corporatist embeddedness in political decision-making – where tripartite structures exist, they often have only consultative competences and are unable to influence unilateral government decisions. Even in the third arena CEE unions faced more difficult conditions than their western European counterparts because of the weakly developed civil society in the post-communist region (Howard 2002), which means that labour advocacy coalitions were not a standard element of unions’ repertoire of action.

The country chapters confirm the findings of Bernaciak and Kahancova (2017b) and Trif et al. (2021) that under these adverse conditions CEE unions had to be innovative in developing their regulatory capacity. In contrast to unions in western Europe, which focused more strongly on strengthening their capacity to act in the area of collective
bargaining, the CEE unions focused more strongly on their capacity to influence government decisions. This, in turn, is not surprising given the more important role of the state and legislation in regulating the employment relationship. Given their limited direct access to government decision-making they relied more heavily on mass demonstrations, public protests and direct democracy, such as people’s initiatives and referenda (Bernaciak and Kahancova 2017b). In so doing, unions in CEE, similar to western European unions, opened up their agendas to new and formerly neglected segments of the workforce, addressing wider societal goals and issues that go beyond the traditional concerns of their core membership. While these initiatives were not always successful in influencing government decisions it nonetheless helped to raise their public profile and legitimacy.

To summarize, the country chapters confirm that unions are attempting to seek new relationships with employers and the state, as well as alliances with campaigning social movements and community campaigns. In essence, these union initiatives are aimed at building bridges between unionists and non-unionists in the form of a shared narrative, leading some to suggest that the object of such initiatives is social movement unionism (Nissen and Rosen 1999). Underpinning these initiatives are attempts to reframe union narratives to generate shared identities and solidarity between unionists and social movement activists (Hyman and Gumbrell-McCormick 2017; Tarrow 2005). To this end unions have campaigned with and/or supported environmental, women’s, living-wage and a wide range of local community campaigns, among others.

Alliances involving unions and civil society organizations, however, are far from straightforward. In particular, such alliances are likely to be irregular and project-based rather than entail wide-ranging organizational change (Heery et al. 2011). Furthermore, the service-oriented practices of unions differ from the relational culture of community organizations, thus jeopardizing long-term joint involvement on the part of members of both unions and community organizations (Tapia 2013). The shift from workplace to community or broader concerns also requires a reformulation of union practice to embrace demands beyond the workplace (Pocock 2011). This could be problematic, as workplace issues, support at the workplace and improved terms of employment are central to recruiting and retaining union members, while issues beyond the workplace are relatively marginal (Waddington 2014). To be successful, such
a shift requires a more complex mobilization and organization of workers based on an intersectional analysis of demands and issues (Doellgast et al. 2021).

**The strategic challenge at European level**

The internationalization of trade union activity involves two parallel processes: the development of meaningful international trade union organization with sufficient capacity to act, and an international orientation within national trade unions that are willing to engage in transnationally coordinated activities. During the ‘golden age’ from about 1945 to about 1975 the almost exclusive focus of union activity was within the nation-state. The globalization of production and trade, coupled with the associated growth in the number and scale of multinational companies (MNCs); successive enlargements of the EU; and the increasing scope of EU regulation, however, have rendered such an exclusive focus on the nation-state obsolete, necessitating a more pronounced international focus of trade union activity. The absence of transnational regulation to accompany the global shifts in production and trade has resulted in an unregulated space within which unions wish to introduce regulation. Specifically, within the EU, the range of transnational regulations is burgeoning, particularly in relation to European integration, the establishment of the European single market and the introduction of the euro. Each of these developments within the EU has created a further imperative for transnational activity if unions are to influence the terms of the European regulatory framework.

Institution-building was at the core of much initial transnational union activity. Following the establishment of the ETUC in 1973, it increased its coverage through affiliation. While the ETUC was formed with seventeen affiliates from fifteen countries, today it comprises ninety-two affiliates from thirty-nine countries, including Christian and communist unions. By the end of the twentieth century ETUC coverage was representative of western European trade unionism and its position as political interlocutor with European institutions was secure (Dølvik 1999), albeit on the basis of structure before action: that is, institutional coverage was more advanced than the capacity to mobilize (Turner 1991). During the early years of the twenty-first century ETUC coverage was extended throughout CEE (Degryse and Tilly 2013).
The ETUC was reorganized in 1999 around a key division of labour: while the ETUFs would handle industrial matters within multinationals, the ETUC was to be the primary institution dealing with the European Commission in the political sphere. EU regulations directed towards minimum standards in worker participation at national and transnational levels and within the boards of European companies; the establishment of a wide range of sectoral social dialogue committees; and the introduction of arrangements for pan-European social dialogue involving the ETUC and employers’ organizations comprise but a small part of the emergent EU regulatory framework. Each of these developments necessitated a trade union response in terms of a policy position and institution-building.

To assess how these and other developments have impacted on the development of trade unions in the EU this section advances in two stages. The first stage identifies the challenges facing union organization at European level as the rate of European social policy development has slowed. The second stage examines initiatives taken beyond the formal ETUC and ETUFs. In practice, of course, there are links between these two levels of activity, but examining them separately facilitates analysis. At the core of both levels of activity are tensions between institution-building and trade union action, and between national and European levels of trade unionism. Evidence presented in the country chapters and elsewhere demonstrates that institution-building has not been matched by transnational trade union action of similar scope.

**European social policy development: ‘Europe yes, but differently’**

From the late 1970s, and particularly during the Jacques Delors Presidency of the European Commission, 1985–1995, the EU fostered improvements in trade union security and internationalization within Europe as efforts were made to inject a ‘social dimension’ into the European integration agenda to accompany the single market (Anderson

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7 The slogan ‘Europe Yes, But Differently’ is taken from a ver.di campaign (*Europa ja, aber anders*) that highlighted the trend towards neoliberal policy solutions at European level and the downplaying of social market solutions.
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This development was characterized by wide-ranging debates and procedural reforms intended to promote social policy measures; the proposal of hard law solutions to social policy matters; and the funding of institutions necessary for a European social market, including the ETUC (Falkner 1998: 55–77; Hantrais 2000: 1–20). The attractiveness of these policies promoted a more wide-ranging interest in ‘Europe’ among some trade unionists as a means of finding a European solution to the decline of national unions that went beyond a permissive consensus (Ross 1995). In short, the ‘attractiveness’ of Europe promoted a shift of material and political resources by trade unionists to influence the form and structure of the proposed European social dimension.

Following this ‘high point’, the EU, influenced by political shifts in Member States, subsequently ‘distanced’ itself, in practice if not rhetorically, from the promotion of a European social dimension, particularly during the Manuel Barroso Presidency, 2004–2014 (Natali and Vanhercke 2011; Roth et al. 2011). Elements of the neoliberal economic and social agenda informed EU policymaking; the social policy measures that were adopted comprised many soft law elements and weak minimum standards, and made no attempt to upwardly harmonize social policy. Furthermore, a series of European Court of Justice (ECJ) decisions prioritized the operation of the single market over the rights of labour, including the right to strike (Bücker and Warneck 2010; Sapir 2014; Fazi 2014). Compounding these developments was the impact of the policies of the Troika following the sub-prime and financial crisis of 2008–2009, which effectively dismantled long-standing industrial relations systems in which trade unions were embedded in several countries (Koukiadaki et al. 2016; Schulten and Müller 2015). The accentuation of the asymmetry between market-enforcing and market-correcting measures (Scharpf 2009), coupled with the rising social deficit apparent in economic and social union (Hinarejos 2016) raise four significant strategic challenges for trade unions at European level.

First, the ETUC has steadfastly supported European integration on the assumption that it comprises both economic and social dimensions (Lapeyre 2018). This support ensures that resources and recognition are afforded to the ETUC by European institutions in the form of financial

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8 At the time there was wide-ranging criticism of the Delors-led Commission from both the political right and the left (Ross 1995). Only with the hindsight of experience of successive Commissions has criticism from the left tended to dissipate.
support and social partner status. The position of the ETUC has become increasingly contradictory with the diminution of the social dimension. The ETUC supports European integration in principle, but in the absence of a viable social dimension it is implicitly, but rarely explicitly, critical of the process of European integration (Fazi 2014; Martin and Ross 2004). The ETUC has thus to decide: if it is in favour of a particular form of integration that incorporates a meaningful social dimension, what action should be taken when integration follows a different path? Compounding this situation is the ETUC’s call to defend ‘social Europe’: that is, its various national formulations (ETUC 2015). As outlined in every country chapter, however, many of these national variants of the European social model are undergoing rapid and fundamental change, raising the questions: what is the objective of the call to defend ‘social Europe’ and is such a call best mounted from Brussels or within Member States? The increase in the diversity of national social models implicit in enlargement emphasizes the challenge faced by the ETUC in this context.

A second strategic challenge faced by the ETUC concerns the generation of social policy objectives around which affiliates can cohere. This challenge is exacerbated by the subsidiarity of social to economic aspects of integration and the disparity in national variants of the social model. A range of measures that were relatively uncontroversial, in principle if not in practice, were promoted and/or accepted by the ETUC and affiliates in the period up to about 2000, for example, in the areas of information and consultation, sectoral social dialogue, working time, and part-time and agency work. In addition, the European Social Charter was fundamentally revised in 1996 and the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union was incorporated into the Treaty of Lisbon in 2009. In short, a growing body of legislation and Charter commitments underpinned the development of a rudimentary social dimension. At a general or abstract level trade unions support the further strengthening of the social dimension. The formulation of more concrete proposals, however, exposes the diversity of union positions and the strategic challenge of the ETUC to formulate positions around which affiliates can cohere (Adamczyk 2018; Busemeyer et al. 2008).

The example of the ETUC’s internal debate about the European Commission’s initiative for a Directive on adequate minimum wages in the EU, which was adopted in autumn 2022 (European Parliament and Council of the European Union 2022), illustrates the scale of this
challenge for the ETUC. The debate about a European minimum wage policy has a long and controversial history, which is dominated by two opposite positions. Whereas trade unions from CEE countries have campaigned for some kind of EU-level regulation on minimum wages, affiliates from the Nordic countries reject any European approach to the issue of minimum wages (Furaker and Lovén Seldén 2013; Schulten et al. 2015).

CEE unions strongly support a European minimum wage directive because it would provide a minimum wage floor to protect workers from in-work poverty and forced labour migration. In light of the highly fragmented and decentralized collective bargaining system in many CEE countries, marked by extremely low collective bargaining coverage and union density, a European minimum wage would, furthermore, strengthen the unions’ bargaining position, especially if it could be linked with initiatives to support multi-employer bargaining to prevent social dumping (Müller and Platzer 2020; Stredula et al. 2020). In contrast, Nordic unions strongly resist a European minimum wage directive because they are concerned that it would interfere fundamentally with their voluntaristic tradition of industrial relations. From their perspective, a European minimum wage directive threatens to undermine collective bargaining autonomy, hamper the normative effect of collective agreements, exert negative pressure on wage levels, and weaken incentives for organization among both workers and employers (Dahl et al. 2020; Lovén Seldén 2020; Risgaard et al. 2020).

In the past, the ETUC managed to broker a compromise between these diametrically opposed positions by including in its resolutions various non-regression and guarantee clauses in order to protect systems with higher standards (ETUC 2017a). This allowed the Nordic unions to agree to resolutions, which in turn enabled the ETUC to speak with one voice vis-à-vis European policymakers.

The von der Leyen Commission initiative to introduce a legal instrument on minimum wages, however, was a game-changer because the debate was no longer about defining a position in favour of a European minimum wage policy more generally; now it was about how to shape a concrete legislative initiative which carries potentially far-ranging implications at the national level. This puts to the test the historic compromise reached between the ETUC affiliates because it dramatically increased the stakes for the affiliates. This makes the ETUC’s task of developing a robust common position even more difficult because it sheds a harsh
light on the fundamentally different positions of its affiliates (Müller and Platzer 2020). It should also be noted that the political opportunity structure of the von der Leyen Commission may prove to be more open than those of her predecessors. In addition to minimum wage initiative, for example, are the initiatives on the platform economy, the wage transparency directive and the revision of the European works councils directive. It remains to be seen whether these initiatives will constitute a change in overall direction, but the adoption of directive on adequate minimum wages can be viewed as a paradigm shift towards a more social Europe (Müller and Schulten 2022).

A third strategic challenge is long-standing and concerns attitudes towards European integration and involvement. Since the ‘golden age’ Europe has been a concern primarily among senior cadres of trade unionists (Busemeyer et al. 2008; Hyman 2005). The Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU), the German Trade Union Confederation (DGB, Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund) and the Swedish Trade Union Confederation (LO, Landsorganisationen i Sverige), for example, are affiliated with the ETUC, but they are organizations to which trade unions affiliate as member organizations. The political distance between trade union members and the ETUC is thus vast, articulated by multiple layers of trade union officialdom and raises challenges regarding international trade union democracy (Hyman and Gumbrell-McCormick 2020). Before the ascendency of neoliberal policies within the EU, EU scepticism among trade union members was widespread (Archer 2000; Teschner 2000; Wessels 1995). This was later exemplified by substantial numbers of Dutch and French trade unionists voting against the Treaty on European Union in 2005, many Irish trade unionists voting against the Lisbon Treaty in 2008, and many Danish (2000) and Swedish (2003) trade unionists voting to reject the euro, although a ‘yes’ vote was promoted by senior trade union leaders in each case (Hyman 2010). Furthermore, the core groups from which trade union membership is drawn, manual and white-collar workers with no university education, appear disproportionately to be eurosceptics (Hyman 2010).

The country chapters illustrate that this scepticism generates a wide range of responses. In Spain, for example, Podemos, a left-of-centre populist party, expresses a very critical view of neoliberalism within the EU and has attracted large numbers of trade unionists to vote for it. In contrast, in Italy substantial proportions of trade unionists vote for right-of-centre populist and nationalist parties (Leonardi and Carriere
2020: 279), whereas in Germany no fewer than 12.2 per cent of all trade unionists voted for Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) in the 2021 General Election, a right-of-centre populist party that opposes EU membership (DGB 2021). Brexit, of course, represents an extreme example of this development as large swathes of trade unionists and workers targeted for membership by trade unions voted to leave, perhaps on the grounds that they viewed themselves as excluded from any benefits of EU membership. These developments place the ETUC and senior trade unionists in a strategic quandary. The ETUC supports European integration and generates policy prescriptions favouring integration and a more substantial social dimension. This position is compromised on two counts. First, the financial and political resources made available to the ETUC by European institutions, supplementing affiliation fees, may limit its capacity to oppose integration measures founded on neoliberal assumptions (Hyman 2005; Martin and Ross 1999). Second, the long-standing euroscepticism among many European trade unionists limits the ETUC’s capacity to mobilize members and generate solidarity in support of a more social Europe (Mosimann et al. 2019). These points notwithstanding, however, various ETUC campaigns such as ‘A New Path for Europe’ in 2013–2014 and ‘Europe Needs a Pay Rise’ in 2017–2018 explicitly rejected austerity policies and argued for more demand-side approaches to promote sustainable growth and quality jobs (ETUC 2014, 2017b).

A fourth challenge faced by trade union organizations at the European level arises from the points elaborated above: namely, if the benefits of European-level trade union engagement decline, will the intensity of trade union engagement also diminish? For many trade unions based in CEE this issue is compounded by resource limitations, which restrict representatives’ participation in international meetings. The country chapters highlight the participation of lay representatives in European works councils and, to a lesser extent, on European company boards: both instances in which the company meets the trade union representatives’ expenses. Concerning participation elsewhere the country chapters are more sanguine. The wave of establishment of union offices in Brussels

9 Trade unionists voted in the following proportions for the other major parties in the 2021 election: Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands (SPD) 32.1 per cent; Christlich Demokratische Union Deutschlands (CDU) 18.6 per cent; Die Grünen (Greens) 13.0 per cent; Freie Demokratische Partei; (FDP) 9.0 per cent; and Die Linke (Left) 6.6 per cent.
around the time of the Delors Presidency subsequently fell away. Trade union resources remain concentrated at national level, with the ETUC operating with markedly fewer staff than many western European national trade union confederations. Furthermore, since 2000 the number of ETUFs has been reduced from sixteen to ten by mergers, driven in no small part by the need to consolidate organization financially. In short, it remains an open question whether national trade union movements will continue to support and finance European trade union organizations at the same level as previously, given the limited social advances achieved in recent years and the financial restrictions at national level arising from membership decline.

**Beyond the ETUC and the ETUFs**

In recognition of the point that many trade unions cannot now defend or promote their members’ interests by acting within the nation-state alone, there are a host of formal and informal examples of cross-border trade union initiatives. Many of these are not independent of the activities of the ETUC and ETUFs and have developed from initiatives at European level. These initiatives can be bilateral, in the form of cooperation across the border separating two Member States; multilateral, involving trade unions from a range of Member States; or founded on transnational institutions, such as European works councils (EWCs), and serve a wide range of purposes. Apart from the information and consultation arrangements that figure large in EWCs and similar institutions, the principal purpose of many cross-border trade union initiatives is to promote convergence in living standards and union organization. As is the case with participation within the ETUC and ETUFs, more limited resources, the relatively infrequent presence of officials dedicated to international affairs, and language barriers are cited in several of the country chapters as restricting the range of cross-border initiatives involving trade unions from the EU11.

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10 In particular, the formation of industriAll from the merger of the European Metalworkers Federation, the European Mine, Chemical and Energy Workers Federation and the European Trade Union Federation of Textiles, Clothing and Leather, and the formation of UNI-Europa from the merger of the European Federation of Commercial, Clerical, Professional and Technical Employees, the European Federation of Communications International and the European Federation of Media and Entertainment account for the reduction in the numbers of ETUFs.
European works councils

EWCS are a prime example of an institution created at European level that has promoted institution-building beyond formal requirements and has, in some instances, led to transnational union action. The EWC directive adopted in 1994 has led to the establishment of more than 1,100 institutions of transnational worker representation within MNCs (De Spiegelaere et al. 2022). The country chapters report that involvement in EWCS is a key example of transnational participation. Formally EWCS are institutions of European coverage, but in a few instances have promoted the formation of World Works Councils (WWCs) in recognition of the geographical scope of the MNCs within which they operate. Some EWCS have been involved in transnational campaigns to influence the terms of corporate restructuring. In a few cases these campaigns have included industrial action, albeit only when trade unions have been directly involved (Bartmann and Dehnen 2009; Hanké 2000). EWCS and ETUFs have established procedural arrangements whereby European Framework Agreements can be concluded, constituting a step towards the system of multi-level governance envisaged for Europe (Marginson and Sisson 2004; Rüb et al. 2013). Operationally, EWC representatives may include non-unionists, so the ETUFs have put institutions in place to prevent a decoupling of EWC activities from trade union strategies. To this end, most ETUFs have established standing committees to facilitate cooperation and strategic alignment between ETUFs and EWCS. To address company-specific challenges ad hoc trade union coordination groups may be convened. Taking a different tack that reflects low levels of union density in its area of operation, UNI Europa has in process a policy to establish trade union alliances (TUAs) to work in conjunction with each EWC. A trade union alliance comprises trade union officials from the unions with interests in the MNC in addition to some unionized representatives from the EWC (Rüb and Platzer 2015; Waddington 2016). The development of agreed policies, the implementation of campaigns to pursue these policies and institution-building at transnational level necessitate considerable resources, which may explain why some EU11 unions do not participate in such policymaking. The key point, however, is that the establishment of one institution, an EWC, has led to further institution-building and trade union action.
Interregional trade union councils

Interregional trade union councils (IRTUCs) may be both bilateral and multilateral and may involve trade unions from countries that are not EU Member States. Furthermore, there may be several IRTUCs within a single Member State: no fewer than nine are reported in Austria alone. The ETUC mentions the presence of more than forty IRTUCs formed to address the disparities that characterize terms and conditions of employment in border areas (ETUC 2009). While many IRTUCs are rudimentary organizations, others are relatively sophisticated. The IRTUC covering Western Hungary and Burgenland in Austria, for example, operates networks at industry level and within specific companies (Hammer 2010). More generally, IRTUCs tend to focus on measures to counter wage and social dumping, the exchange of information on collective bargaining and wage development, migration, vocational training and advice on workers’ rights. Many IRTUCs are thus primarily transnational institutions of information exchange rather than a basis on which to initiate trade union actions. The issue of transforming structure into action that resonates throughout this section on transnational trade unionism thus also applies to IRTUCs. Polish workers employed at the Olkiluoto 3 construction site, for example, failed to enlist support from Finnish trade unions during their labour dispute (Lillie and Sippola 2011). Similarly, the transition from the exchange of information within an IRTUC to concerted trade union action involving the trade unions party to the IRTUC is reported as being relatively rare (Bähr and Albrecht 2014; ETUC 2009; Hammer 2010).

Union-driven initiatives

In addition to transnational ventures ‘triggered’ by EU institutions are a host of developments with different forms and objectives instigated by trade unions. The majority of these initiatives focus on lobbying, capacity building, recruitment and organizing, and migrant workers. The ‘classic’ and long-standing institution designed to facilitate the lobbying of European institutions is the Nordic Council of Trade Unions, which serves as a forum to generate agreed positions among participating unions. More recently the Nordic Council has been supplemented by the Baltic Sea Trade Union Network, which has conducted wide-ranging analyses of a series of issues pertinent to the area, including energy and climate policies, infringements of trade union rights, equal representation and
labour migration (Ostrowski 2017). To date the Baltic Sea Trade Union Network has not acted as a lobbying organization of European institutions, although it has pressured more local institutions within its area of influence (Kall et al. 2019; Ostrowski 2017). It is noteworthy that similar formal arrangements have yet to be established in other geographical areas of the EU, although more informal exchanges involving Southern European- and Visegrad-based trade unions take place.11

At the core of transnational exchanges founded on capacity building, recruitment and organization is the transfer of resources from West to East. Several of the country chapters, for example, report trade unions based in CEE applying to the European Social Fund for project funding to build union capacity. UNI Europa has also set up three organizing centres: the Central European Organizing Centre in Poland (2016), Europe’s Power and Organizing Centre to organize workers in commerce (2019), and the South-East European Organizing Centre in Romania (2021). These centres are intended to train local trade unionists in organizing skills, while also targeting specific multinationals in the organizing centre’s industry or locality. Similarly, trade unions based in the EU16 have transferred resources to various — often neighbouring — countries with the object of deepening union density and enhancing capacity. To illustrate, IGM has established exchanges with and materially supported the Metalworkers’ Trade Union Federation (Vasas, Vasas Szakszervezeti Szövetség) in Hungary; the Federation of Industry (FI, Federación de Industria) of the Workers’ Commissions (CCOO, Comisiones Obreras) and the Federation of Industry, Construction and Agriculture (FICA, Federación de Industria, Construcción y Agro) of the General Union of Workers (UGT, Unión General de Trabajadoras y Trabajadores) in Spain; and the United Auto Workers at the Chattanooga, Tennessee plant of Volkswagen in the United States in order to consolidate union organization at German-owned automotive production sites. In addition, IGM operates a series of regional exchanges direct towards capacity building and the exchange of information pertinent to rounds of collective bargaining: IGM Bavaria with unions in Austria, Czechia, Hungary, Slovakia and Slovenia; IGM Nordrhrine Westphalia with unions in Belgium and the Netherlands; and IGM Küste with unions in Denmark.

11 The Visegrad nations include the EU Member States of Czechia, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia.
A third prominent form of transnational trade union initiative mentioned in the country chapters concerns the support of migrant workers. Such initiatives may take many forms. The most prominent is defence of migrant workers’ interests by a trade union in the host country. Migrant Bulgarian workers, for example, may be supported by Austrian, Cypriot, German or Romanian unions as a result of collaborations between trade unions. Elsewhere unions have set up branches or similar local organizations to represent foreign workers where the number of workers of a particular nationality is large. The most ambitious project to represent migrant workers was the EMWU founded in 2004 by IGBAU, mentioned above. A combination of internal organizational flaws and resistance to the EMWU from other European construction workers unions led to its failure (Greer et al. 2013). In practice, national trade unions protected their interests within the Member State to the detriment of the EMWU.

The future

Visser (2019) argued that there are four possible scenarios for trade unions based on the dynamics of membership: *marginalization*, in which trade unions are effectively displaced and become ever weaker; *dualization*, where trade union representation covers the core and relatively stable segments of the workforce, but unions fail to establish organization in new and expanding segments of the workforce; *substitution*, where trade unions are replaced by alternative forms of social and non-governmental organizations; and *revitalization*, where trade unions reconnect with new worker constituencies and develop a myriad of innovative and alternative strategies. In aspirational terms all trade unions seek, at least rhetorically, some form of revitalization.

While there are many difficulties in allocating trade union organizations at an aggregated Member State level to one or other of Visser’s (2019) categories, the authors of the country chapters indicate a range of national experiences. In some cases, for example, the authors identified the presence of more than one of these categories. In Ireland no tendency was identified as dominant. In contrast, in France two elements of polarization were viewed as likely: polarization between non-union small- and medium-sized companies and larger unionized companies, and between compromise-oriented and oppositional unions. The Irish and French cases are thus disregarded here. Similarly, several authors classified unions
in their country as likely to be stable or exhibit continuity rather than by reference to a Visser category. With these provisos in mind, Table 29.1 outlines the authors’ responses on twenty-five Member States. Table 29.1 shows that marginalization is the likely pattern of development in eleven countries, dualization in nine, substitution in one and revitalization in five. Authors identified eight countries as likely to be characterized by stability or continuity. Four points immediately emerge from these observations.

Table 29.1 Likely future developments using Visser’s categories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Member state</th>
<th>Dualization</th>
<th>Substitution</th>
<th>Marginalization</th>
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Source: authors’ elaboration based on the country chapters.
First, despite the range of initiatives intended to adapt trade unions to changed circumstances, many of which are outlined in the country chapters, the majority of authors view marginalization or dualization as the most likely outcome. Implicit in these observations is the assumption that organizing initiatives to unionize private sector services are unlikely to have a marked impact in the foreseeable future. Second, seven of the EU11 Member States are allocated to the marginalization category and four to dualization, suggesting that the situation of trade unions based in the EU11 is particularly problematic and their priorities are likely to differ from those of many unions based elsewhere in the EU. Marginalization and dualization tendencies are considered to be almost absent in Germanic and Nordic Europe except for Luxembourg and the Netherlands, where marginalization is regarded as a possibility. Dualization is considered to be a possibility in southern Europe, particularly in Cyprus, Italy and Spain, whereas in Greece and Portugal both marginalization and dualization are regarded as possibilities. Third, three countries operating a variant of the Ghent system (Belgium, Denmark, Finland) are allotted to the stability or continuity category and the fourth (Sweden) to revitalization. State supported systems that promote unionization thus appear to underpin greater optimism for future developments. Similarly, Austria, with a consistently high rate of collective bargaining coverage because of the endurance of the *Arbeiterkammer* system (Table A1.H), is allocated to the stability or continuity category. Fourth, it is apparent that allocation of a country to the stability/continuity category arises from various circumstances. Stability/continuity in Estonia and Latvia, for example, suggests that unions are unlikely to exert a marked influence on the labour market or the political sphere in the foreseeable future, as outlined in these country chapters. In contrast, stability/continuity in Austria, Germany and the Ghent system countries implies a wider range of trade union policy options.

Against the backdrop of the country experts’ sanguine assessment of the future development of trade unions in the EU, what can be identified as the key issues for the foreseeable future? To this end reference is made to the likely attitudes of employers, the state and trade unionists within this timeframe.

In general terms, private sector employers within the EU adopt different stances within the EU16 and the EU11. Within the EU16 employers have promoted the decentralization of collective bargaining, particularly
in manufacturing, and have tended to resist unionization at small- and medium-sized enterprises in private sector services, even where legislation guarantees workplace representation. The introduction of minimum wage systems, for example, reflects the unions’ failure to agree or enforce terms and conditions of employment through collective bargaining. Furthermore, it is apparent that where industrial bargaining remains in place many agreements are framework agreements rather than ones that set the actual terms and conditions of employment. The country chapters do not suggest that the views of private sector employers in the EU16 are likely to shift markedly from the stance adopted since before 2000. Within the EU11 employer resistance to collective bargaining, particularly industrial bargaining, is widespread, with the result that coverage is low; industrial bargaining is rare, with the exception of Slovenia; many collective agreements merely replicate terms laid out in legislation; and an unknown proportion of the industrial agreements that remain are framework agreements (Müller et al. 2019). Although some EU11 country chapters mention the tightening of labour markets as likely to pressure employers, there is no expectation that this will lead to more positive attitudes towards collective bargaining among private sector employers, particularly industrial bargaining, and unionization. Within both the EU16 and the EU11 managers continue to employ human resource management (HRM) techniques designed to encourage direct communication within the workforce rather than indirect communication via workplace representatives. Such techniques limit the impact trade unions can exert at the workplace and may limit the development of union organization at newly established or weakly organized sites.

The state is likely to impinge on the development of trade unions as an employer and as a legislator. As an employer, throughout the EU the state has tended to retain industrial collective bargaining to a greater extent than private sector employers, albeit with considerable devolution of bargaining competences to lower levels. This increases the pressure on local union organizations to negotiate on a wider range of issues and on higher levels to coordinate across the devolved settlements to ensure comparability. Given the relatively high coverage of collective bargaining in the public sector, however, there are opportunities for unions to reduce the extent of free riding.

The influence of the state as a legislator, of course, depends on the electorate. Where neoliberal oriented governments are elected the evidence presented here suggests that the trends outlined in many of the
country chapters will continue unabated. In these circumstances trade unionism is likely to become more marginalized and the opportunities for revitalization more restricted. The election of social democratic or labour governments may promote unionization, although membership decline and the diminution in collective bargaining coverage have also occurred since 2000, when such governments have been in office. The impact of social democratic or labour governments depends on, among other things, the extent to which they reject neoliberal policy assumptions (see Portugal and Spain for example). What is clear is that the political distance between trade unions and political party ‘allies’ is now greater than in the past and reduces the chances of supportive legislation.

It should also be noted that European policy decisions have unknown effects. Trade unionists in CEE, for example, argue that the introduction of the Directive on an adequate European minimum wage (particularly Article 4) will assist extension of collective bargaining coverage where it is currently less than 70 per cent. It remains to be seen whether these expectations will be met in practice. Similarly, the outcome of initiatives taken by the ETUFs to build capacity and to extend workplace representation in the EU11 is uncertain.

What is clear is that union activity, either independently or in conjunction with allies will be at the centre of revitalization campaigns. It is also apparent that union activity at the workplace is key to both membership recruitment and retention (Waddington 2014). More problematic is the ignorance, indifference or resistance to renewal within a substantial number of trade unions, the challenges of internal reform required to ready unions for renewal campaigns, and the limited resources available to some unions, particularly many of those in the EU11. How the tension between these two sets of forces is resolved will determine whether trade unions in the EU can pick up the pieces left from the neoliberal challenge.

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Conclusion: picking up the pieces


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Conclusion: picking up the pieces


Conclusion: picking up the pieces


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Conclusion: picking up the pieces


Conclusion: picking up the pieces


Abbreviations

**ABVV/FGTB** Algemeen Belgisch Vakverbond/Fédération générale du travail de Belgique (General Federation of Belgian Labour)

**AFL-CIO** American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations

**ASZSZ** Autonóm Szakszervezetek Szövetsége (Autonomous Trade Union Confederation)

**CBI** Confederation of British Industry

**CCOO** Comisiones Obreras (Workers’ Commissions)

**CEE** Central and Eastern Europe

**ETUC** European Trade Union Confederation

**ETUF** European Trade Union Federation

**EMWU** European Migrant Workers Union

**EU** European Union

**EWC** European Works Council

**FH** Fagbevægelsens Hovedorganisation (Confederation of Trade Unions)

**FI** Federación de Industria (Federation of Industry)
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<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Name</th>
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<td>FICA</td>
<td>Federation of Industry, Construction and Agriculture (Federación de Industria, Construcción y Agro)</td>
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<tr>
<td>FNV</td>
<td>Dutch Trade Union Confederation (Federatie Nederlandse Vakbewegung)</td>
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<td>FTF</td>
<td>Confederation of Professionals in Denmark (Functionærerernes og Tjenestemandenes Fællesråd)</td>
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<td>HRM</td>
<td>Human resource management</td>
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<td>IGBAU</td>
<td>Construction, Agriculture and Environment Union (Industriegewerkschaft Bauen-Agrar-Umwelt)</td>
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<td>International Labour Organization</td>
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<td>IRTUC</td>
<td>Interregional Trade Union Council</td>
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<td>Danish Confederation of Trade Unions (Landsorganisationen I Danmark)</td>
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<td>ver.di</td>
<td>United Service Workers’ Union (Vereinte Dienstleistungsgewerkschaft)</td>
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<td>WWC</td>
<td>World Works Council</td>
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Appendix A1

Indicators relevant to trade unions in the European Union

The following tables comprise the raw data that are utilized in the graphs presented in Chapter 1 ‘Trade Unions in the European Union: identifying challenges’; they are referred to throughout the 27 country chapters. The ‘standard’ country acronyms set out in the table below are applied.

**Country acronyms**

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