

National trade unions

and the ETUC:

A history of unity and diversity

Andrea Ciampani and Pierre Tilly (eds)

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Foreword

This edited volume can be considered a follow-up to the book 1973-2013: 40 years of history of the European Trade Union Confederation¹ (ETUC). As the title suggests, this publication studied the origins and internal organisational development of the ETUC, and its positions, activities and policies in an ever-changing socioeconomic and political landscape which has seen the ascent of neoliberalism.

The ETUC as a monolithic organisation, representing the interests and needs of workers in Europe, thus stood central in this first volume, and the research focused on the ETUC's influence and effectiveness vis-à-vis the European Commission (EC) and the European employer organisations.

However, the internal debates, disputes and actual decision-making processes within the ETUC largely remained a 'black box', and this was one of the main reasons for the production of this second book. For this publication, financed by the ETUI, we invited a number of authors to participate and approached Andrea Ciampani and Pierre Tilly with the request to be its editors. We greatly appreciate their endeavours in coordinating the project. The authors of the individual country chapters in this volume seek to crack open the ETUC's 'black box', at least partly, by highlighting how different trade union models, traditions and cultures have come together in the organisation. As in the first volume, the contributors take a historical perspective, highlighting the determinants, developments and legacies of the relationship that the union confederations have had with the European integration process over a forty-plus year period. This is a twofold exercise. The authors examine the dynamic relationship between the member organisations and the Brussels-based ETUC within the context of the highs and lows of the European integration project. At the same time, they study the possible influence of the ETUC upon its member organisations

1. Degryse C. with Tilly P. (2013) *1973-2013: 40 years of history of the European Trade Union Confederation*, Brussels, ETUI. Apart from the English version, the book is also available in Chinese, French, German and Italian.

in their home countries, via the unions' international or European departments or through the feedback effects of debates at both the European and national levels.

Accordingly, the research questions are manifold. Why do national union confederations (or union centres) apply for ETUC membership and what kind of pathways have candidate member organisations been able to use to attain membership? What have been the reasons for (dis)approving applications and what are the (initial) expectations of ETUC membership? In what ways and how effectively do affiliated organisations play the diplomatic game to influence ETUC policymaking? To what extent are the union confederations changing their views on the authority, jurisdiction or mandate of the ETUC and the resources it has, because of how the policies of the European Union (EU) have affected, negatively or positively, their home countries? And finally, how has the relationship evolved over time between the national confederations and their union members at home in terms of promoting and supporting the 'European Social Model' (including its transnational industrial relations institutions) and the ETUC approach towards European integration?

The ETUC currently has 89 member organisations from 39 European countries. Evidently, not all of them could be studied and included in one single volume.² Apart from the availability of authors, several factors were considered in selecting the countries, such as: the union confederations' significance within the ETUC; the mixture of union identities and cultures; the combination of different economic structures, industrial relations systems and welfare state regimes; and, finally, the geographical balance of countries. These considerations resulted in the inclusion of the following ten countries: Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Spain, Sweden and the UK.

Belgium, France, Germany and Italy all have a long-standing European tradition, having been along with the Netherlands and Luxembourg the six founders of the European Economic Community. Most of the union confederations in these countries were co-founders of the ETUC; others like the French Confédération Générale du Travail (CGT, General Confederation of Labour) or the Belgian Algemene Centrale der Liberale Vakbonden van België/Centrale Générale des Syndicats Libéraux de Belgique (ACLVB/CGSLB, General Confederation of Liberal Trade Unions of Belgium) joined at a later stage, illustrating how the ETUC has been able to bring unions together despite their ideological divisions. Together with France and Italy, Portugal and Spain, the two countries of the Iberian Peninsula that joined the EU in 1986, represent an ideologically fragmented and often strained union landscape. The union confederations from Sweden and Norway, divided along occupational lines but brought together in 'Nordic alliances', represent the rather 'hesitant' Nordic approach to European integration. Undoubtedly, now when we are witnessing the unfolding aftermath of the United Kingdom's historic decision to leave the EU, studying the shifting approach of the Trades Union Congress (the TUC, the UK's national trade union centre) towards European integration and the ETUC is as relevant as ever. Finally, while the history of unions in central and eastern Europe is quite diverse, the focus in this book is on the union centres from Poland, the largest of the so-called ex-communist countries, and particularly on NSZZ Solidarność (Solidarity), which held a distinctive position before the fall of the Berlin Wall.

2. Likewise, the relationship between the ETUC and the European Trade Union Federations and Interregional Trade Union Councils is not fully explored here. However, the authors do pay attention to the federations and councils in the country chapters if relevant to their analysis.

Understandably, the chapters often differ in terms of their method, structure, time-frame and content. One of the difficulties the authors have been confronted with in their analysis is the many different actors that not only intervened in the national internal debates but also at the European level. Therefore, only a partial picture can be sketched of these debates. In a way, it is easier to follow the EU debates because of the limited number of arenas (the ETUC Congress, its executive committee, steering committee and specialised committees and the days of action) and the relative accessibility of sources. Moreover, the academic literature on the historical dynamic between union confederations at the national level and the EU level is rather limited. Besides secondary literature, memoirs and testimonies, the chapters very often make use of expert interviews with key figures; some authors also turn to the (union) archives for the early decades.

It is impossible to do justice here in this foreword to the empirical richness of the chapters. However, it can be stated unreservedly that all chapters provide varied and very valuable insights into the relationship between the ETUC and the national union centres or union confederations, which could feed into theoretical approaches regarding, for instance, multi-level governance, the Europeanisation of national organisations, trade union democracy, and transnational union strategies and learning. Content-wise, emphasis is placed on those issues that matter most in the relationship between the ETUC and its member organisations. Below we give a brief overview of the chapters.

In Chapter 1 Jürgen Mittag undertakes an analysis of the German trade unions in relation to the European integration process over the past 60 years. Mittag provides a multi-dimensional and nuanced account of the interaction between the ETUC, one of its co-founders the Deutsche Gewerkschaftsbund (DGB, the German Trade Union Confederation), and its main affiliated unions such as IG Metall, in relation to the integration process. In particular, he warns against taking a simple teleological view of history. Thus, although the integration process gave rise to an organisational and structural adaptation of union policies in the long run, the commitment of the German unions to the European project has been marked by periodical ebbs and flows as well as by heterogeneity in their preferences, which sometimes diverge from those of the umbrella organisation, the DGB. This evolution has been predominantly driven by the interplay between the international, European and national political/ideological and socioeconomic environments, as well as the unions' defence of the interests of their rank-and-file members. Those specific interests, embedded in a sectoral and national context, have given rise to multi-level and multi-faceted union strategies aimed at influencing the European decision-making process. The underlying principle for the German unions has been a pro-European stance and the promotion of a 'Social Europe' which, in their view, is today needed more than ever and which would preferably resemble the corporatist institutions of the Rhineland model of capitalism.

The French case, presented by Claude Roccati in Chapter 2, is particularly complex, as the three main confederations, Force Ouvrière (CGT-FO, Workers' Force), the Confédération française démocratique du travail (CFDT, the French Democratic Confederation of Labour) and the CGT, have exhibited different attitudes towards European integration and the role of the ETUC, and come from different union traditions (social democrat, Christian and communist, respectively). The author shows how the French union confederations have evolved in different ways in this regard. FO, while critical about the creation of the ETUC, initially had a more positive opinion about EU integration. Since the end of the seventies, however, FO has undoubtedly become one of the strongest critics of EU integration among the union confederations. The CFDT, meanwhile, adopted a much more positive (although

still critical) approach, which was in line with the ETUC consensus for a long time but is now generally more positive than that of most of the other ETUC members. Finally, the CGT, initially very critical of EU integration, viewing it as a capitalist project, later adopted a more nuanced position.

Written by Andrea Ciampani, there are two common threads running through Chapter 3, which focuses on the three Italian union confederations and their relationship with the ETUC; two of these confederations, the Confederazione Italiana Sindacati Lavoratori (CISL, the Italian Confederation of Workers' Trade Unions) and the Unione Italiana del Lavoro (UIL, the Italian Labour Union), co-founded the ETUC. First, the chapter makes the argument that when new applications are made by unions from countries that are already represented in the ETUC, the approval from Brussels to become affiliated is very much conditioned by the dynamics within the national domain of union relations. In the Italian domain, characterised by a union pluralism based on cultural and ideological divisions, Ciampani demonstrates that the affiliation of the Confederazione Generale Italiana del Lavoro (CGIL, the Italian General Confederation of Labour) to the ETUC in 1974 only became possible when the union started changing strategy towards pro-European integration in the late sixties and a process of union unity between the three confederations emerged in the following decade. Although this unity never materialised, Italian union confederations have taken a common stance at the European level when it comes to the position of the ETUC and the role it should play; this forms the second thread in Ciampani's chapter. While tensions between the confederations have never disappeared, particularly due to different strategies towards Italian industrial relations and economic policies, good personal relationships between the union leaders in charge of the European or international departments have contributed to a relatively common understanding. Over time, the confederations have been striving for an ETUC that is more than just a political lobbying institution in Brussels; they would prefer an ETUC that acts as a 'real trade union', which implies delegating more union power to the European level, within the multi-level EU decision-making process.

Chapter 4, written by Richard Hyman, begins by noting that 'the relationship between Britain and the rest of the continent has always been problematic'. The British industrial relations system is also very different from the continental one and became even more distinctive following Margaret Thatcher's attacks on collective bargaining and unions. The position of the TUC on EU integration evolved from that of clear hostility to substantial support after the speech by Jacques Delors at the Congress of Brighton in 1988. Nevertheless, divisions remained between the sectoral trade unions regarding the Economic and Monetary Union and later the Lisbon treaty. The TUC is one of the biggest member organisations of the ETUC and consequently a big contributor to the budget, and although this caused some problems in the beginning, it has been a loyal supporter. John Monks, ETUC General Secretary from 2001 to 2009, does not recall any significant arguments between the TUC and ETUC. Nevertheless, according to Hyman the debates around the EU have affected only a minority within the union movement and most of the activities still focus on national or sub-national matters.

Chapter 5 covers Belgium. The two authors Quentin Jouan and Pierre Tilly highlight the fact that the two main Belgium trade unions were part of different internationals, the Algemeen Christelijk Vakverbond/ Confédération des Syndicats Chrétiens (ACV/CSC, Confederation of Christian Trade Unions) in the Christian one and the Algemeen Belgisch Vakverbond/ Fédération Générale du Travail de Belgique (ABVV/FGTB, General Federation of Belgian Labour) in the socialist. They also represent different union approaches. At

the international level the relationship between them (or their affiliated sectors) was complex and is still difficult from time to time, and this makes the simple fact that these two unions were together in the ETUC from the beginning important. The authors briefly explore different facets of the relationship between the Belgian union confederations and the ETUC, from the solidarity movement with NSZZ Solidarność and the closure of Renault-Vilvoorde to the Bolkestein Directive and the Doorn group's coordination of wage bargaining for the Benelux countries and Germany. Their argument is that the Belgian union confederations have always been very dynamic and innovative and have been pushing in various ways to have a more active and efficient ETUC; they are also among the few arguing for increasing the ETUC budget. However, their proactive commitment towards the ETUC has not been without its critics at certain moments.

In Chapter 6 Sigfrido Ramirez Perez presents the case of the Iberian trade unions and their move from the periphery to the centre. Covering Portugal and Spain, both countries still under fascist dictatorships at the time of the ETUC's creation, the author highlights the complex period from the creation of the ETUC in 1973 to the democratic transition in the late seventies and early eighties. The admission to membership of the Spanish Comisiones Obreras (CCOO, Workers' Commissions) and the Portuguese Confederação Geral dos Trabalhadores Portugueses (CGTP, the General Confederation of Portuguese Workers), both with historical links to communist regimes, caused great tensions within the ETUC, particularly from the German side. Following the election of Emilio Gabaglio as General Secretary in 1991, the Iberian union confederations played an increasingly active role in the ETUC, as illustrated by the succession of ETUC presidents Cándido Méndez (Union General de Trabajadores/UGT, General Workers' Union) and Ignacio Fernández Toxo (CCOO). Politically, the union confederations in the two countries have followed different paths: 'The break of the UGT and CCOO from their historical political allies contrasted with Portugal where UGT-P [União Geral de Trabalhadores – Portugal] and CGTP maintained strong links with political parties on European issues.' Finally, the author draws attention to their role since 2008 in the aftermath of the Great Recession in pushing the ETUC to adopt a radical critique of the EU governance while at the same time supporting a strong alternative European integration.

In Chapter 7 Erik Bengtsson examines the historical scepticism of the Swedish union confederations towards the European integration process and European-level coordination between unions. A similar scepticism can be found among the union confederations in other Nordic countries: even before the establishment of the ETUC they had set up their own regional coordination body called the Council of Nordic Trade Unions. The Council has since been the backbone of Nordic union cooperation (and eventually of cooperation with unions from the Baltic States). Although some scepticism still lingers today, particularly regarding such 'core issues' as collective bargaining, the Swedish unions have over time taken a more favourable stance towards, and even pro-active role within, the ETUC. Many factors can explain this development: the weakening of the unions' institutional embeddedness at home, Sweden becoming a member of the EU in 1995, and the ongoing economic integration in Europe. Finally, while this integration began as a relatively positive experience, particularly with the EC pursuing a social agenda in the late 1980s, serious concerns started to emerge at the beginning of the 2000s and persist to this day about cross-border posting and agency work challenging the Swedish labour market model.

In Chapter 8 Jon Erik Dølvik considers the question of whether the Norwegian experience has mirrored that of Sweden. His analysis starts by looking at the position of Norway vis-à-vis the EU, which has left a long-lasting mark on the Norwegian unions' strategies and

policies on European issues. The ‘no’ side won in referendums on EU membership in both 1972 and 1994, and the European Economic Area (EEA) agreement with the EU means that since 1994 Norway has been an insider in the Single Market but, as a non-Member State, an outsider in the political decision-making process towards further European integration. Norway’s asymmetric position has provided an incentive for the unions to strive for better cooperation and coordination with the ETUC, which was co-founded by the Landsorganisasjonen i Norge (LO, the Norwegian Confederation of Trade Unions). At the same time, however, internal discord about European integration has lingered in the Norwegian labour movement since the two referendums and the EEA agreement became a contested issue in certain union circles; the current suboptimal regulation of cross-border posting and agency work is not very helpful in this respect.

Finally, Chapter 9, written by Adam Mrozowicki, is the only chapter analysing unions from central and eastern Europe. The chapter’s historical timeline begins in the early 1980s with the establishment of NSZZ Solidarność. Following increasingly repressive measures by the communist state, the union turned to the international arena, although not without difficulties due to its strong anti-communist sentiments. While Mrozowicki remains dubious about the possible impact of the three Polish union centres on the ETUC in terms of its identity and organisational structures, the author does provide ample evidence of this influence working the other way round. Indeed, the two main union centres had to overcome their historical rivalry (in particular on the issue of material assets, but also related to their political identities) in order to join the ETUC. The Polish union centres’ membership of the ETUC and European Trade Union Federations has strengthened their cooperation, served to professionalise their European and international activities and promoted the simplification of their internal union structures.

The ETUC has not only acted as an arbitrator between competing union confederations. From a union policy standpoint, the chapters reveal above all that national union centres and confederations, although not without reservation, have increasingly embraced the idea of a stronger European umbrella organisation defending the interests, needs and rights of the working class across Europe.³ The transnational and democratic power of the ETUC is now more than ever needed to countervail the dominance of multinational companies, continuing cross-border financial flows, the undermining of wages and working conditions that have been established in national laws or collective agreements, and the expansion of platform capitalism (the latter reviving to a certain extent the working conditions of the nineteenth century). However, in the current era marked by a deepening ecological crisis, refugee movements, Brexit, the rise of right-wing populism and the common distrust of mainstream political parties, the national unions’ rank and file in several countries are divided in their support for and very appraisal of the European project, although not for the first time. Indeed, at the time of writing this foreword, the EC is once again attempting to find an answer to the EU’s now very existential crisis by promoting a social Europe via President Jean-Claude Juncker’s ‘Social Pillar’. It remains to be seen whether this will constitute a fundamental change in European social policy or merely pay lip service to the idea.

This volume offers a different perspective to those publications that cover only the EU level of the trade union movement. As well as encouraging diverse interpretations and

3. A further strengthening of the ETUC would also involve a substantial shift of resources from national levels to the transnational level. However, most unions across Europe are struggling with their own resources at home.

debate, not only among union leaders but also union activists, we hope that the book will attract more attention to this topic of the interaction between national trade unionism and European integration, and even inspire further publications.⁴

While there is a logical focus on the main union confederations in those countries marked by union pluralism, the chapters are well-balanced in terms of their scope and attention. However, they can only provide *a* history, not *the* history, of the relationship between the ETUC and the national union confederations. As the discipline of historiography aims to demonstrate, the *objective* history of a subject does not exist; historical research imbues the past with meaning according to the dominant paradigms of the time in which it is executed. Each epoch sets its own research questions, leading to constant revisions in our interpretation of the past. In view of this reality, we encourage the development of a critical dialogue between this book and future historical research, as well as further research on union confederations in countries that are not covered in this volume.

Finally, we are very grateful to Luca Visentini, the current General Secretary of the ETUC, and the former General Secretaries Emilio Gabaglio, Lord John Monks and Bernadette Ségol for their advice, guidance and continued support during this long-term project. Furthermore, all country chapters have been reviewed by several former or current Deputy General Secretaries and senior advisors of the ETUC, as well as by academics in the field of employment relations at the national or European level. We would like to thank the following people for reviewing the chapters and for their valuable comments: Manuel Bonmatí Portillo, Jean-Jacques Danis, Joël Decaillon, Christophe Degryse, Jon Erik Dølvik, Tom Jenkins, Wolfgang Kowalsky, Rafaël Lamas, Jean Lapeyre, Lars Magnusson, Juan Moreno, Józef Niemieck, Claude Rolin, Kaare Sandegren, Knut Arne Sanden, Peter Scherrer, Peter Seideneck, Robert Szewczyk and Jeremy Waddington. Last but not least, we wish once again to thank the editors Andrea Ciampani and Pierre Tilly, as well as the authors, for their patience, time and devotion to this fascinating project⁵.

Philippe Pochet, ETUI, General Director, and
Kurt Vandaele, ETUI, senior researcher

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4. There are two forthcoming books in this series which make the European Social Dialogue a central focus. The first book is written by Jean Lapeyre. He assesses his own experience as a key actor in the Social Dialogue, which he was in charge of as the Deputy General Secretary of the ETUC from 1991 to 2003. In the second book, General Secretary Carola Fischbach-Pyttl of the European Federation of Public Service Unions (EPSU) tells the history of one of the most important European Trade Union Federations.
 5. However, needless to say, the views and interpretations expressed by the authors are theirs alone and do not necessarily reflect those of the union confederations, union centres concerned or the reviewers.



Introduction

The ETUC, national unions and European society: a multilevel history

Andrea Ciampani and Pierre Tilly

The current political climate in Europe makes this a crucial moment at which to be revisiting the history of the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) and its member organisations. Recent events and ongoing societal problems, such as migration and refugee flows, the European debt crisis and its aftermath, environmental issues and post-Brexit political concerns, all have far-reaching consequences for trade unions in Europe, at both national and transnational levels. Trade union leaders, meeting in London on 11 July 2016 to discuss the next steps for the EU and the UK after the Brexit referendum, namely agreed that the EU needs ‘to deliver on sustainable growth, quality jobs and hope for the future’ and to end austerity if it is to tackle the ‘anger and disillusionment of voters’, which the leaders noted ‘is not confined to the UK’¹. Since its creation in 1973, the ETUC has over the decades developed several guidelines which have marked a number of important milestones in its historic journey. With the necessary historical and critical distance, it is now possible to make an initial assessment of this history and embark upon a wider reflection on the nature of this international social actor and to what extent it has achieved its goal of representing social issues at the European level.

Following the publication of a historical record of the ETUC in 2013 to mark the occasion of its 40th anniversary, the ETUI recognised the particular importance of conducting a study that would offer an analysis of how relations between the European and national levels of trade unionism have developed over time. How have the relationships between the ETUC and its member organisations evolved

1. <https://www.etuc.org/press/brexit-unions-gear-battle-interests-working-people-eu-uk#.V8lfwU1f2po>

during this historic process? Have they progressed to the point of forming a common action framework? Further questions also present themselves. Have the relationships between the ETUC and its member organisations contributed or not to a Europeanisation of the latter, in terms of their internal structures? How have member organisations understood the events which have affected the process of European integration, as well as the various changes in the welfare state, in the role of private markets in our economies (with their enhanced integration at European level) and in a macroeconomic framework increasingly characterised by global international competition? In other words, has the European integration process substantially altered the historic dynamic of the national trade union organisations, or not?

These are the questions asked in this historical study into the relationship between the ETUC and its member trade unions. While the book takes a multidisciplinary approach, including contributions from both historians and social researchers, the historical perspective is of particular importance here. One question that is revisited in this publication is how the complex conjunction of interests and strategies arising from organisations with differing trade union cultures has been historically managed at the European level. In the 20th century, longstanding divisions in Europe affected trade unionism alongside other areas of society. In 1949, there was a delicate coexistence between the free trade unionism in the west and that of the people's democracies on the other side of the Iron Curtain. Since the fall of the Berlin Wall, however, the differences between the trade union models have become less marked, resulting in a virtually universal acceptance of the values, aims and practices of democratic and reformist trade unionism. At the same time, due to the dynamics of globalisation, the European trade union movement has been able to extend and strengthen their international social relations (Hoffmann 2002).

Formed between 1973 and 1974, the European Trade Union Confederation, which held its latest and 13th Congress in Paris in 2015, has been closely linked from the beginning with the European integration project. Right from its inception, the ETUC has positioned itself as a trade union partner in the European political project. It does not merely represent a regional body within the international labour movement. It allows social democrat and Christian trade unions, and those with other democratic identities, to coexist under the same banner. To understand the approach pursued by the ETUC, it is essential to revisit the reasons for the development of trade union organisations, which were created to protect workers' interests in the employment relationships that developed at the time of the industrial revolution. They later became national confederal organisations, but this led to the need for a new form of representation at the European level, and national trade unions decided, at various times and for various reasons, to group together in a European trade union movement (Beever 1960; Ciampani 1995). A wealth of initiatives and actions subsequently formed the initial phase in the internationalisation of the national trade unions, and this helped to support the process of structuring the national confederal dimension, to the point where the national trade unions started speaking with a single voice at European level.

There is no question that, at the same time, the demand for social representation at the European level was spurred on by the European integration process. As already emphasised, the process of shaping the ETUC and Europeanising the trade union movement significantly differed from the historical processes leading to the formation of national trade union organisations at the end of the 19th century and beginning of the 20th century (Martin and Ross 2001). While the formation of large national trade unions at that time was the result of social mobilisation, the ETUC's development followed a very different course. Its top-down set-up emphasised 'structure before action', in order to effectively represent

the confederations, but the national trade unions were hesitant about transferring any real power to the ETUC (Turner 1996).

The 1970s saw an increase in the discussions and interactions between the national trade unions that were members of the ETUC, particularly concerning the amount of influence of each national organisation at European level. The impetus coming from the national level for the formation of European trade unionism resulted in increased participation in the economic and social decisions made at the EU level. This process of dialogue and participation often stumbled and even stalled completely, as at the end of the 1970s, but it was in fact the entire European integration process that was in crisis at this time. The beliefs that had shaped the creation of the ETUC were confirmed at the beginning of the 1980s: rather than being pushed forward by political Europe, social Europe was in fact enabling and giving political impetus to European unification. The changes associated with the new phase of globalisation and the Delors Commission's initiatives pushed the ETUC to structure itself more as a transnational trade union organisation. The Single European Act and the Maastricht Social Protocol and its extensions in Amsterdam offered national trade unions access to an international arena of action in way that they had never enjoyed before, i.e. the possibility of negotiating European and therefore transnational agreements.

This extraordinary process of recognition, which also changed trade union culture, was accompanied by the development of Interregional Trade Union Councils, created for the first time in 1976, and by the formation of European Works Councils in accordance with the 1994 Directive adopted for this purpose. These developments unquestionably opened up new horizons and areas for trade union action. In order to pursue its traditional role of managing negotiations and achieve its goals of protecting and developing jobs, trade unionism (at the company, local, national and confederal levels) has been forced to confront the Europeanisation and globalisation of the labour market. We can therefore understand why, since the Milan Congress in 1985, the issue of a European trade union mandate to defend workers' interests at this level has been repeatedly raised. These factors led to a resumption of discussions between the national trade unions, not only on making the ETUC's action and organisation more efficient, but also on reinforcing its political role when tackling the new challenges posed by the socioeconomic changes produced by the ideological-political environment, European policies such as successive enlargements, the introduction of the euro, and the issue of how to protect Europe's competitiveness against emerging economies.

Participation in the Community decision-making process and the possibility of signing European agreements between business and labour have potentially helped to give the ETUC a more robust structure, both internally and in its external role of representing workers' interests. This development casts a new light on the need for a European trade unionism capable of tackling both the global society and a structural crisis which is hitting workers hard at every level. Within this framework, strong and constructive relations between the national trade unions and the ETUC are increasingly essential, particularly as the political crisis in European integration is, to a certain extent, weakening and delegitimising European action in the trade union arena.

In the historiography of European integration and studies into trade unionism in international relations, national historiography is generally the only method applied. The Anglo-Saxon countries have a stronger tradition in the study of trade unionism and industrial relations (Campbell and McIlroy 1986). Very early on universities and militant bodies in these countries set up networks to study this issue, creating the International Association of Labour History Institutions in 1970. A few attempts have been made to encourage joint

research work between universities and regional trade union organisations. One example was the ASEGE network set up through a European programme in 2002, which studied *Le mouvement syndical, comme Acteur Social Européen pour une Gouvernance Economique (The trade union movement as a European Social Partner in Economic Governance)*. Today, there is a greater willingness than in the past, on the part of trade unions, to cooperate with the academic world in defining topics of interest and committing to a framework that allows the necessary critical distance from the action and immediate management of the trade union movement. However, a more transnational approach in both the subjects broached and sources used would be very valuable in terms of ensuring a better understanding of current or past developments.

A transnational approach such as this, which connects the national level with that of the ETUC, is still relatively uncommon in the scientific field and needs to be developed in the future. In terms of contemporary history at an academic level, the study of trade unions and their development is fairly rare, with the extent varying according to the country. Furthermore, a glance over the historiography reveals a predominance of historical and political studies, basically covering the period between the end of the Second World War and the 1980s. Thanks to the results of a series of scientific works conducted since the 2000s, however, we are better placed to assess the position of and role played by the trade union movement in European integration. Of particular interest in this respect are a number of seminal works on the slow and difficult construction of a social Europe, which both confirm its complexity and adopt a comparative approach (Hoffmann 2002; Pigenet *et al.* 2005; Dølvik 2005; Tilly 2005; Schirmann *et al.* 2006; Ciampani and Gabaglio 2010; Mittag and Tenfelde 2012; Gumbrell-McCormick and Hyman 2013). It should be noted that from the 1990s onwards the analytical framework and tools for studying trade unionism fundamentally changed with the virtual disappearance of works by historians. This can be explained by the rules on accessing public archives, which generally made these works inaccessible during this period. On the other hand, experts in political science, sociology and industrial relations have offered us a very interesting conceptual, methodological and analytical framework for the historical interpretation of events, combining a general modelling approach with the historian's appreciation of the unique nature of different events and developments. This has gradually allowed a new approach to be taken to analysing the emergence of a European social partner, whose absence was noticeable in 1973 not only in the societal panorama of old Europe, but also in global labour history.

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Chapter 1

Flexible adaptation between political, social and economic interests: the multi-faceted Europeanisation of German trade unions

Jürgen Mittag

1. Views and issues

At the first congress of the *Deutsche Gewerkschaftsbund* (DGB – German Trade Union Confederation) in the British zone of occupation in April 1947 in Bielefeld the economic policy expert Viktor Agartz assigned top priority to overcoming the hostility between France and Germany. Franco-German rapprochement, according to Agartz, ‘could be the nucleus and crystallisation point of a future new European order’.¹ Two years later, at the DGB’s national founding congress in Munich, 12–14 October 1949, the delegates demanded that the German trade unions take a pro-European stance, with the motto ‘for a European economic community’.

Against the background of this view – and many similar position statements – in the post-war period a basically positive attitude towards European integration has generally been attributed to the German trade unions. While the French trade unions are associated with a strong willingness to strike and the British and most Scandinavian trade unions with latent Euroscepticism (Schulten 2005: 20), the German trade unions are usually characterised by – besides organisational unity, free collective bargaining, works constitutions and codetermination – a basically Europe-friendly position. Sometimes they are considered to have played a ‘pioneering role’ (Jacobi 1991) in the development of Europe’s transnational social dimension. Although such views and assessments are widespread, it cannot be ignored

1. Entschließung zur europäischen Verständigung [Resolution on European understanding], in: Protokoll des 1. Bundeskongresses des DGB [Minutes of the first national congress of the DGB] (BBZ), pp. 163f.

that the German trade unions' European policy in the post-war period is coherent only up to a point: the German trade unions do not represent a monolithic unity nor do their stances on Europe since 1945, characterised by numerous ruptures, strategic shifts and changing national and European conditions, represent a clear or even linear trend.

In light of these initial observations this contribution aims, at the same time, to provide a summary and differentiated analysis of the relationship between the German trade unions and European integration since the end of the Second World War. In order to achieve this, both knowledge about the substantive and programmatic reactions to the idea of European integration in the DGB and individual trade unions, as well as the structural and organisational adaptations of trade union policy on Europe in the past 60 years will be examined. We have a twofold objective: to demonstrate not only the basic European policy models and goals, but also European policy realities in individual historical periods in order, ultimately, to account for the Europeanisation of the German trade unions in a broader sense.

We shall pay particular attention in this context to the dimensions of change. With regard to the issues dealt with here we shall examine especially the significance of the founding of the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) in 1973 (Dølvik 1999) for the activities of the German trade unions at the European level and the alternative strands of interaction that have been pursued in the past 40 years. Of particular interest in this regard are the different forms of cooperation, structures and models of trade union federations in their historical genesis, as well as the resulting formation, fusion and differentiation processes. We shall also look briefly at bi- or multilateral transnational trade union contacts.

The European integration process is extremely complex, going on in various segments in EU states and in individual policy fields, with different levels of intensity and at different rates. It is largely agreed that political integration to date has not led to the formation of a European (labour) society because every state has continued to pursue its own social policy. Against this background and based on observations from a political-science perspective on changing statehood in Europe (Ziltener 1999; Wessels 2000) the present chapter is also intended to help answer the question of how far trade unions as key actors in communities organised as states have changed their organisational structures and forms of action in the face of the challenges of European integration. The main intention is thus to look at the specific role – but also the adjustment and development processes – of German trade unions in Europe's multi-level system. Particular attention will be paid to the interaction of the national and European levels and we shall examine whether the vertical 'linking' of state competences finds a correlate in the adjustment processes of trade unions between national and European level. What we are really interested in thus finds expression in the question of how far the German trade unions have 'opened up' and have turned their attention to policymaking in Brussels and Strasbourg in order to be able to participate actively in the European political cycle. Or have the German trade unions thus far shied away from such opening up? Should they even be characterised, as the literature has tended to do, as 'laggards' reacting hesitantly and defensively to the changes in European integration (Niethammer 1977)? Or do the trade unions rather stand for a 'Europeanisation of employment relations' (Hoffmann 2011: 131)? Ultimately, these considerations also take account of the issue of how far European integration has led to a transnationalisation of trade union interest representation.

To put the Europe-related activities of the German trade unions into perspective we need at least an outline of the German trade union system. This outline is accompanied by an overview of the current state of research in the following section. This is followed by a

detailed look at particular phases of the German trade unions' European policy activities, in which both the DGB and individual trade unions are considered. In the summary we attempt, taking an analytical perspective, to take stock of both fundamental trends and processes of differentiation with regard to German trade unions.

2. Background and present state of research

The German trade union system is based on five basic principles. The first principle is the dual structure of labour interest intermediation based on segregation between employee representation at sectoral level by trade unions and at plant level by works councils and shop-floor representatives. The two structures differ in their legal basics, stakeholders and issues. They are, on one hand, framed by the Collective Agreement Act, which allows free collective bargaining between unions and employer organisations at the sectoral level, including the right to strike or lock out. On the other hand they are framed by the Works Constitution Act, which regulates interest representation by work councils at plant level, where strikes are strictly forbidden in order to keep the peace between management and workforce.

According to this, collective bargaining on wages or working time, as well as single plant bargaining agreements on pay or overtime are also separated. Both levels are strictly limited by strong legal regulation and institutionalisation, which is deemed to be the second principle, bestowing continuity. Hence, instruments for applying pressure during industrial conflicts – for instance, strikes or lockouts – are highly regulated, while 'illegal' or 'wildcat' strikes are forbidden.

The third principle is the comprehensive interest representation of the entire workforce. Collective agreements on wages, for example, are an enforceable right for all employees in the sector and not only for trade union members. Trade unions and their peak organisations therefore are aiming at a monopoly on representation.

As a fourth principle, German trade unions and work councils act as intermediate organisations in industrial conflicts between labour and capital. Works councils, for example, 'must explicitly consider the companies' economic goals' in their rules of procedure. Even during hostile disputes trade unions must avoid that the economy or social peace be harmed due to their role as mediators between labour and capital, taking neither an ideological nor a political approach.²

The fifth and final principle of the German labour relations system is the centralised organisation of trade unions and employer organisations at peak and sectoral level, allowing centralised collective bargaining and binding agreements. The relationship between the DGB and its affiliated industry trade unions is characterised by both coordination and interdependency – also at European level. While the DGB represents Germany's trade unions in the ETUC based on mutual understanding with the unions at sectoral level the industry trade unions and other organisations have established their own representations and channels of influence.

2. The German trade unions regularly publish so-called 'election touchstones' (*Wahlprüfsteine*) in the run up to elections to compare party manifestos of the German political parties relative to their own interests and policies but they officially do not prefer a particular party.

Although the history of German trade unions in general has been well researched from both a historical (Schönhoven 1987; Schneider 2000) and a social science (Armingeon 1987; Schröder/Wessels 2003; Müller-Jentsch 2011) perspective, work on the role of German trade unions within the framework of European integration – apart from some initial surveys – remains in its infancy. Different from studies on other countries only a few general presentations are available (Hoffmann 2001; Fetzer 2005; Mittag 2009) that look at the topic systematically. Three relatively distinct periods of research on the relationship between German trade unions and European integration characterise research development to date: the first period is marked by a strong concentration on the national level. US political scientist Ernst B. Haas's neofunctionalist reference work *The Uniting of Europe* (Haas 1958: 214–239) went into considerable detail on national trade unions. This can be traced not least to the fact that the first studies on the significance of social policy for European integration appeared as early as the mid-1950s (Hampel 1955; Schierwater 1968). Most works on the issue were written by trade unionists, such as Ludwig Rosenberg (1973: 223–289) and Heinz Potthoff (1964 and 1973).

A second phase of integration-related trade union research began in the early 1970s, but from then on considerable attention was paid to the European level. Major impulses for this were provided by the deepening of the European (Economic) Community. After the heads of state and government, at the Paris summit in October 1972, emphasised the goal of a 'European social union' and the European Commission in January 1974 presented an extensive list of measures in the form of the 'social policy action programme', which also aimed at involving the social partners in this process, now academic scholars, in addition to trade unionists, increasingly turned their attention to the European level. Apart from analysing models and the positions of trade union officials (Elsner 1974) the first more extensive source studies appeared (Köpfer 1982). Horst Thum (1982) and Gloria Müller (1991) have documented that social policy arguments and issues concerning codetermination have always played a key role from a German perspective. The research work carried out during this period consistently represented the thesis that German trade unions had reacted merely defensively to Europe's political and economic integration in their transnational activities. The thesis of 'defensive integration' was substantiated especially by Lutz Niethammer (1977), who expounded a developmental history perspective on the German trade unions, focusing on the ETUC. Consequently, for a number of years the ETUC was at the centre of integration-related trade union research (Ruhwedel 1976; Oesterfeld/Olle 1978). In addition to this the first studies (Stöckl 1986) appeared on the European industrial union federations and the sectoral craft union federations at the European level, such as the Europäische Gewerkschaftsföderation für den Landwirtschafts-, Nahrungsmittel- und Tourismussektor (EFFAT), covered more recently by Rainer Fattmann (2008).

The adoption of the Single Market within the framework of the Single European Act, which came into force in 1987, ushered in a third research phase. This phase – which is still ongoing – is characterised by greater attention to the interweaving of the national and European levels, as well as a more comparative orientation. Exemplifying this approach are a number of collective volumes on industrial and work structures in the European Single Market (Siebert 1989; Steinkühler 1989; Deppe and Weiner 1991; Grebing and Wobbe 1993). In contrast, genuinely historical approaches are marginal, concentrating especially on the initial phase of European integration (Volkman 1996; Bühner 2004; Lauschke and Mittag 2011). With the advent of monetary union and eastern enlargement the European integration process took on a new dimension in the 1990s. The (western) European trade

unions, which were already on the back foot, if not in crisis at this point, were confronted by a new environment for their activities, which led to the emergence of new frames of reference (Bieler 2006). Accordingly, trade union research in the past two decades has focused on stocktaking of recent developments, as well as the analysis of crisis phenomena (Bobke 1994; Leisink *et al.* 1996; Foster and Scott 2003; Gumbrell-McCormick and Hyman 2013). Increasingly, the focus is not so much on trade unions as on industrial relations in the process of globalisation and European integration (Rüb and Müller 2013). An exception is the publication in 1998 on 25 years of the ETUC (Hoffmann and Gabaglio 1998).

Over the past decade scholarship has been dominated by country studies (Kendall 1975; Lecher 1981; Däubler and Lecher 1991; Mückenberger, Schmidt and Zoll 1996; Silvia 1999). Also increasingly important is work on the strategies of the ETUC and the European branch federations in pursuit of trade union interests, on macroeconomic regulation and on collective bargaining (Sörries 1999; Hein *et al.* 2004). These comparative works, concerned mainly with the national sphere – although with partial reference to European integration – have been complemented by studies on Europe as a borderless territory and look at whether and to what extent trade union policy also acts ‘without borders’ or beyond borders (Platzer 1991; Guinand 1997).

Characteristic of research work since the end of the twentieth century is an increasing orientation towards the notion of the Europeanisation of national trade unions (Dürmeier and Grundheber-Pilgram 1996; Groux, Mouriaux and Pernot 1998; Weinert 2001; Gollbach 2005; Platzer 2010). Political science research in particular has used the term ‘Europeanisation’ to describe the changes and adaptation processes triggered in national political systems and actors by European integration. In this connection research has focused not only on programmatic ideas and models, but also on the effects of European integration on trade unions’ operational structures (Busch 1996; Deppe 2001 and 2005). In this context, with the more recent studies by Suzuki (2007) and Bühlbäcker (2007) more detailed, source-based historical work has been done on German trade unions, especially the DGB. This has been complemented by further source-based work by Buschak (2014). However, more sources need to be investigated if the past two decades of Europeanisation are to be examined on a scholarly basis. Besides written sources contemporary witnesses must also be considered. To this end we conducted interviews with Willy Buschak and Reiner Hoffmann (Buschak 2013 and Hoffmann 2013) for this contribution.³

Overall, much more recent political science work is dominated by the view that the trade unions in general – given the changes occurring in the political systems and actors that make up their environment – have so far reacted only half-heartedly or at least tardily to the challenges posed by the European integration process (Wessels, Maurer and Mittag 2001). A whole series of more recent trade union research studies have modified this view, however, and have identified a stronger Europeanisation of national trade unions – including Germany – within the framework of industrial relations into a ‘moving target’ (Kowalsky and Scherrer 2011).

3. In 1991 Willy Buschak moved to the ETUC, for which he was active in Brussels for 12 years in various functions and areas of responsibility. Reiner Hoffmann was director of the European Trade Union Institute (ETUI) from October 1994 to May 2003, and then deputy general secretary of the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) until December 2009.

3. Lines of development of German trade unions' European policy

3.1. Up to the end of the Second World War: rhetorical claims and transnational cooperation

The call for the transnational and global political unity of trade unions was crucial for the self-consciousness of the incipient labour movements, but remained utopian. Before cooperation might be possible among the proletariat beyond national borders – and on this Europe's evolving labour movements were agreed – another goal had to be envisaged: overcoming capitalism in individual nation-states (Dowe and Klotzbach 2004). Despite basic agreement on this order of priorities the emergent trade unions, in response to similar challenges, were considering how to promote cooperation beyond national borders as early as the mid-nineteenth century. Research shows that the unification of Europe was an issue in both the German trade union press and at congresses (Buschak 2009), especially after the end of the First World War. Thus in July 1926 Engelbert Graf in *The Metalworker* called for Europe's political consolidation in order to rationalise its economy. The Deutsche Verkehrsbund called in October 1926 for the formation of an economically and politically united Europe.⁴ And at the congress of the International Transport Workers Federation in Hamburg in 1924 not only were there debates on European unification, but the member organisations were exhorted to commit themselves to tackling 'the problem of establishing a united states of Europe' in order to ensure peace in Europe.⁵ Trade union debates on Europe in Germany during this period can be derived above all from the problem of reorganising the European economy after the First World War. The (economic) unification of Europe in this context was considered a key option among the German trade unions, too, in order to hold one's own against the booming US economy.

Bringing this plan to fruition proved to be more difficult than had been thought. Resolutions of this kind rarely went beyond rhetorical proclamations. Joint action on the part of individual national trade unions was also rare. A typical example of how rhetoric and practical policies diverged was the British miners' strike in 1926 and the general strike that followed it. Although the British Trades Union Congress called on its German fellow workers for solidarity it made no arrangements for coordination with the ITUC or the ITF. The two actions – the British general strike and international solidarity with it – ran parallel with one another to a considerable extent. The marked scepticism of the German trade unions with regard to efforts to deepen European cooperation was revealed when, at the end of 1926, the ADGB (Allgemeiner Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund), the 'forerunner' of the DGB, rejected joining the Pan-European Union initiated by the Austrian European pioneer Richard Coudenhove-Kalergi.

Transnational interactions established by trade unions before 1945 primarily concerned general political issues. Activities were often characterised by a personal preference for the partner country or relevant language skills. Trips abroad also represent a key expression of transnational trade union contact; often private interests and trade union activities were linked. Direct individual contacts are thus a constitutive element of bilateral interaction during the interwar period and direct personal communication between officials. An

4. *Metallarbeiter-Zeitung* 17.7.1926; Deutscher Verkehrsbund, 16.10.1926.

5. *Hamburger Echo*, 8.8.1924.

example of this was the regular summer schools held by the International Trade Union Confederation in the 1920s. Several dozen trade unionists from Britain, the Netherlands, Czechoslovakia, Austria, Spain and Germany took part in, for instance, the summer school held in Brussels, 18–31 July 1926. According to the sources, the German participants travelled at their own expense during their holidays and struggled with language difficulties due to the multinational composition of the course.

The more extensive mobilisation activities of the interwar period included high-profile mass gatherings. In this respect Franco-German activities and relations between the German trade unions and the Benelux states were particularly significant. For example, it is notable that on 26 and 27 July 1930 there was an ‘International country meeting of free trade unions from Germany, Holland and Belgium in Aachen, which the trade unions described as an “international festival of 100,000 people (...) for peace and understanding among nations”’. On a somewhat smaller scale two years later was the meeting of 4,000 German, 5,000 Dutch and 10,000 Belgian trade unionists on 2 August 1932 in Liege to demonstrate against war and armament in Europe.

3.2. The 1950s and 1960s: high expectations and constraints

The first trade union organisations were refounded in the Soviet occupied zone within the Free German Trade Unions Federation (FDGB),⁶ followed by the western zones and growing from plant to regional level. From 1949 nationwide peak organisations were established with the German Trade Unions Federation (DGB), consisting of 16 branch-related unions,⁷ followed by the occupational German Salaried Employees Union (DAG)⁸ and the German Civil Service Federation (DBB). Furthermore, a Christian Trade Union Federation (CGB) with somewhat less influence was founded. Organisational density grew rapidly, reaching 36 per cent in 1950. In general, this initial phase of trade union formation was fundamental for a system of pluralistic, non-partisan and sector-wide, mainly industry-related ‘unity unions’.

While during the resistance to the Nazi regime and in the immediate post-war period there was little enthusiasm for European policy among the German trade unions, from 1947 onwards commitment to and appeals for unification of the European continent grew stronger. In the course of this development the German trade unions advocated, among other things, the Marshall Plan and got involved in the re-established Organisation for European Economic Cooperation (OEEC). The DGB – despite considerable criticism in its own ranks – even assented to the Occupying Powers’ Ruhr Statute in November 1949. Underlying these positions was the conviction that trade union achievements could be fully ensured only if the danger of new wars or economic crises could be banished, to which the integration of Europe could make a substantial contribution.

The German trade unions initially greeted the Schuman Plan with caution. The trade unions took a positive view especially of its peace-policy goals. They also welcomed the fact that Robert Schuman’s declaration promised to improve the desolate economic and social situation in Europe and to help to raise workers’ living standards. The ‘planificatory’

6. The FDGB later evolved to become a political and organisational extension of the Socialist Party of the GDR (German Democratic Republic).

7. Due to mergers and the foundation of ver.di the DGB now comprises eight unions.

8. The DAG was affiliated to the DGB at first but established its own structure in 1950.

aspect of the Schuman Plan was even more congenial to the trade unions as proponents of central economic planning. In the course of negotiations enthusiasm for the Schuman Plan among the German trade unions cooled significantly. This was not least because Germany was not treated as an equal partner in the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) and the Ruhr was given a raw deal. Many of these objections were dispelled, however, so that in the end the German trade unions welcomed the establishment of the ECSC. To ensure trade union influence over ECSC decision-making the DGB insisted on the establishment of a trade union interest representative in the High Authority, which Jean Monnet initially rejected, before coming round to the idea. With Paul Finet as ICFTU representative and Heinz Potthoff as representative of the DGB there were two trade unionists at the top table of the European Coal and Steel Community.

The DGB also pursued a fundamentally pro-European policy after its establishment at national level in October 1949 in Munich. Institutionally, the stronger orientation towards international developments was reflected within the DGB, among other things in the establishment in February 1950 of a new department dealing with foreign matters (Department II '*Ausland*'), headed by Ludwig Rosenberg. Under the aegis of the latter, who became chairman of the DGB in 1962, the trade union umbrella organisation expressly committed itself to a united Europe that would break with national egoism in order to prevent a reversion to nationalism, militarism and war. A number of special studies of German trade unions' attitudes to European policy in the 1950s and 1960s (Suzuki 2007; Bühlbäcker 2007) have established that the DGB was strongly committed to Europe, which can be traced to, among other things, the important role played by the free trade unions – which had no historical skeletons in the cupboard – in the very special conditions of post-war West Germany and its limited sovereignty with regard to international recognition and attaining equal rights. At the same time, information obtained as a result of cooperation at European level was used by the DGB for political ends, also in the national arena.

In this context we must not neglect the fact that, besides the DGB, the individual industry trade unions also adopted positions on European policy. The powerful IG Metall was dominated by considerable concerns that the ECSC would undermine codetermination (in coal and steel), restore previous social relations and promote French primacy in coal and steel. The debates within IG Metall thus had not only a fundamentally more political character but also a more sceptical attitude than those of the DGB or IG Bergbau. European unification, according to IG Metall, had to be accomplished in accordance with the principles of economic democracy. IG Metall embedded its list of demands more strongly in the European context than the DGB and IG Bergbau. It saw an opportunity to organise the emerging European Community in terms of trade union demands for a new economic order, in respect of which IG Metall presented itself as vanguard and pioneer of comprehensive codetermination. Only after it became clear that the Schuman Plan had strong support also from the trade union side did IG Metall change its stance; all the more so when the economic benefits of the Coal and Steel Community became evident. In a spirit of 'catch-up Europeanisation' (Jojević 2009: 103) IG Metall sought to become increasingly active in European policy, albeit in the face of 'a complex constellation of forces' (Lauschke 2009: 102). IG Metall responded with a multi-layered strategy which led, over the long term, to a basic stance on European policy. Branch-specific transnational trade union cooperation at the European level was mirrored by a trans-sectoral approach at the national level.

The negotiations on the Treaty of Rome, as in the case of the EEC Treaty, marked a first major turning point for the German trade unions. Trade union influence on the treaty negotiations on the European Economic Community was much less than in the case of the ECSC. The German trade unions even saw the development of the EEC Treaty as a ‘victory for reactionary interests’ (Osterkamp 1951: 423; Barnouin 1986: 7) and regarded it as a failure (Elsner: 40). In reaction to the founding of the European communities the European Trade Union Secretariat (ETUS) was founded in Düsseldorf in 1958 under German leadership, in which only the signatory member states were represented. The ETUS was thus not a supranational trade union body, as the Force Ouvrière (FO, Frankreich) and the Confederazione Italiana Sindacati Lavoratori (CISL) had demanded. The ETUS was merely a coordination body, with which the fragmentation of free trade unions in Europe was brought to an end in four areas, along with the multi-sectoral European Regional Organisation (ERO) in the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, the ‘Coal and Steel Committee’ that emerged from the ‘Committee of 21’ and the committees of the craft unions. From 1958 to 1969, when the European Confederation of Free Trade unions (ECFTU) was founded, this was how the European trade union movement was structured.

The German trade unions were closely involved in the establishment of sectoral committees, which emerged mainly as offshoots of the International Trade Secretariats. For example, IG Metall financially supported the establishment and maintenance of corresponding structures (Henning 2013), while IG Chemie, Papier, Keramik carried out the European coordination of chemical and factory workers – up to 1988 – from its headquarters in Hannover (Rumpf 2001). The sectoral structures that emerged in many branches during this period – which initially represented little more than loose associations and communication networks without a unified programme and representative structures – can be regarded within this framework as cross-border information and communication structures (Platzer/Müller 2009).

The codetermination options of German trade unions were narrowed by the fact that, in accordance with the Treaty of Rome, the Council of Ministers remained largely outside parliamentary control as key decision-making body, the European Commission obtained a monopolistic right of initiative with regard to Council resolutions, the ‘Luxembourg compromise’ nailed down the principle of unanimity and the European Parliament suffered from a chronic lack of competences. As a result, transparent democratic structures that would enable the trade unions’ influence to grow were in short supply. Instead, the trade unions had to fend off the gradual depletion of their institutionally guaranteed options for intervention. One consequence was that, with regard to European policy matters, the German trade unions developed into one of the staunchest advocates of comprehensive democratisation of European bodies. A matter of particular concern was expansion of the competences of the Economic and Financial Committee (EFC), which, in keeping with the DGB’s ideas about macroeconomic codetermination, should have been beefed up into an economic and social council at the European level.

In the 1960s the German trade unions made skilful use of their remaining options for exerting influence, as Stefan Remeke (2009) has researched in relation to social policy in general and youth employment provisions in particular. Personal contacts offered possibilities for informal influence, but even more so the preparatory consultative committees in the Commission’s directorates-general, which could be established with three members, but also on a parity basis. Characteristic of this period was the ongoing demand for a more active social-policy accompaniment to economic integration. This position became stronger

in the DGB in the course of the 1960s and in the early 1970s, peaking in 1972 at the DGB national conference in Berlin in the demand for a ‘social rule of law on a European basis’ and a comprehensive social-policy programme for the European Community.⁹

3.3. The 1970s and 1980s: differentiation and new approaches

In the early 1970s a period of heightened European policy activity can be identified on the part of the German trade unions, accompanied by new adjustment strategies, in both personnel and organisational/programmatic terms. Appointments played a particularly important role. One might mention Wilhelm Haferkamp, who was delegated to the European Commission as DGB representative in 1967, remaining there for 17 years in various positions; Heinz Oskar Vetter, who succeeded Dutchman André Kloos as president of ECFTU in 1970 and was elected president of the ETUC in 1974, seeing it as his task to convince the German trade unions of the necessity of the European project in the teeth of resistance from individual trade unions (Vetter 1983); Alois Pfeiffer, member of the DGB national executive, who in 1985 became a member of the European Commission as successor to Haferkamp; and Ernst Breit, who as DGB chairman 1985-1991 was also chair of the ETUC.

From an organisational standpoint, with the founding of a separate department for ‘European integration’ in 1972, the DGB indicated the importance and weight that this policy area now had (Mittag and Zellin 2009). At the same time, the DGB actively participated in the debates on the reorganisation of trade union work at the European level, with a view to overcoming the organisational fragmentation of the European trade union movement. The founding of the European Trade Union Confederation in 1973 was a key event at the European level. The ETUC was the result of a controversial discussion process, involving numerous setbacks, on the relevant organisational arrangements and substantive issues. The act of founding was ultimately a compromise, negotiated mainly between the British Trades Union Congress (TUC) and the DGB, the two strongest organisations in terms of membership. The decisive cleavage ran between the supporters of a ‘small solution’, led by the DGB,¹⁰ and those of a ‘big solution’, led by the British TUC and the Scandinavian organisations. The ‘small solution’ emphasised the necessary concentration on more effective and consistent interest representation in Brussels. ETUC membership was, accordingly, to be reserved for the relevant organisations from EEC member states. The ‘big solution’, by contrast, demanded that the emphasis should be on coordination of trade union activities in relation to multinational companies (Dølvik 1999: 55, 74; Gläser 2009).

At least the national executive of the DGB was aware, in the run-up to the founding of the ETUC, that the desire for an organisation limited to EEC members represented a somewhat isolated position.¹¹ The willingness to compromise in relation to the proposals of the TUC and trade unions from other countries involved in the discussion process – which

9. Motion 63 National Executive ‘European Integration’ 1972 and Motion 167 National Executive ‘Social Policy in the European Community’ 1972: minutes of the 9th regular national conference of the DGB 25–30 June 1972 in Berlin, Düsseldorf 1972.

10. For more detail on the positions taken in the negotiations by the DGB see the minutes of the meetings of the ECFTU executive committee, ETUC Archive, files 505–522.

11. See minutes of the 31st meeting of the DGB national executive, agenda item 3, Monday 29 May 1972 at the ÖTV Bildungs- und Begegnungszentrum at Koblanckstrasse 1–3, Berlin Wannsee, pp. 4f, in: Archiv der sozialen Demokratie (AdsD), Bonn, Bestand DGB, Abteilung Vorsitzender, 5/DGAI476.

ultimately, after more than once threatening to collapse, led to the abovementioned compromise – gives some indication of the high priority that the DGB accorded to a European umbrella organisation at this point. The marked differences between the trade unions involved with regard to substance, ideology and organisation were reproduced in the ETUC after its founding. The German trade unions' formal options for exerting influence at the European level thus remained limited. A lack of institutional possibilities in this regard within the framework of EEC structures and inefficient as well as heterogeneous sectoral and multisectoral union bodies made it difficult for the German trade unions to assert their interests. The outcome of internal trade union discussions during this period thus comprised mainly general decision-making, with little by way of direct pressure for action.

The increasingly important role of economic policy in the transition from the EEC to the European Community meant that in the 1970s the DGB put European policy on the backburner. The idea was to counter the Single Market with an organised European social policy. Once it became apparent that this aim could be achieved, if at all, only with major concessions the DGB was more inclined to devote itself to trade union work at national level, thus influencing the European level. All the more so because although the German trade unions had suffered a number of setbacks with the Bundestag decisions on the Works Constitution Act and the Employee Representation Act, economic developments, the relatively high trade union density in Germany and the viability of industrial action meant that they were in a position to achieve substantive goals, such as wage rises, cuts in working hours and longer holidays, as well as improvements on such issues as working conditions.

It can therefore be concluded that European social policy in the 1970s was understood essentially as complementing German social policy. This is indicated by the fact that the DGB – despite occasional rhetorical assertions to the contrary – always opposed a supranational European labour administration and a transfer of competences. The DGB wanted to see national social policy standards safeguarded and, in this framework, the maintenance of the subsidiarity principle. This can be attributed not least to the fact that the Community member states are characterised by very different circumstances and also differ fundamentally with regard to their welfare states. As a result, although the German trade unions expressly supported European market integration, because they hoped to see benefits for the export-oriented German economy, they were sceptical concerning such ideas as a European redistribution policy or a European social fund, fearing that they would undermine the national welfare state. The DGB took the view that Community social policy should be only complementary and coordinative with regard to national social policies and, above all, that there should be no transfers of competences or resources from the national to the Community level (Fetzer 2005: 304).

Thus, for example, Ursula Engelen Kefer, then responsible for international social policy at the DGB national executive, in a letter to the European Commission's DG V for Social Affairs, stressed that an extension of the authority of the European social fund with regard to combating unemployment would make sense, from a trade union standpoint, only as a flanking measure in relation to national efforts of employment policy coordination. Along these lines the DGB understood European social policy primarily as advisory in character, resisting any suggestion that recommendations should be converted into binding directives.

Another problem facing the German trade unions' European policy arose from the sometimes diverging standpoints of individual trade unions in relation to the peak organisation. Thus an attempt by the DGB to create a legal framework for branch collective

bargaining at European level was rejected by IG Metall, which regarded collective bargaining as the sole competence of branch organisations and would not tolerate any interference. After this view had come to prevail also in the DGB proposals along those lines in European bodies regularly came under criticism from the German trade unions which, although in favour of the gradual harmonisation of law on collective agreements and collective bargaining in the European Community, were unwilling to limit trade unions' free collective bargaining in the member states. However, looking at recent court cases such as *Laval*, *Viking* and *Luxemburg*, many trade unions inside the ETUC reject such European interference in collective bargaining.

In the early 1980s a different European policy stance emerged, driven by a credibility crisis facing German trade unions, triggered by scandals and mismanagement (Schneider 2000: 368f). The increased pressure to adapt at national level but also new opportunities for interest mediation at the European level contributed to a re-orientation of the German trade unions. This involved a renewed commitment to European policy and pursuit henceforth of an effective multilevel strategy. Thus after the publication of the White Book on completion of the Single Market in 1985 and the adoption of the Single European Act in 1986 the trade unions urged a greater social policy commitment on the part of the European Community, especially the Council and the Commission. The trade unions' multi-level involvement was reflected above all in proposals on common social policy that were put on the table again. At European level the DGB strongly backed the establishment of the European Trade Union Institute in February 1978 in order to deepen access to information and academic research. At national level the DGB influenced the position of the German Council presidency in this respect, got involved in the formulation of a social action programme and a European Community Charter of Fundamental Social Rights within the framework of the ETUC and urged the Commission to implement them.

3.4. Since the 1990s: struggling and coping with the new challenges

In parallel with the deepening of the European integration process with the Single European Act (1987) and the treaties of Maastricht (1993), Amsterdam (1999) and Nice (2003), in the early 1990s the collapse of the GDR and German unification posed the German trade unions new challenges at the national level (Waddington and Hoffmann 2005; Müller-Jentsch 2009). The establishment of an economic, currency and social union within Germany led to changes in organisational structure and collective bargaining, accompanied primarily by economic challenges for both the old and the new *Länder*, which the trade unions had to cope with. European integration and national unification posed the German trade unions two key problems simultaneously, which could be linked only to a limited extent. Needless to say, the trade union leadership and international departments continued to deal with European matters. Experts delegated to European bodies and institutions went on with their work, but trade union attention was directed primarily towards eastern Germany in the 1990s. 'One was', according to Reiner Hoffmann, 'concerned much more (...) with coping with the challenge of German unity from 1989 to the mid-1990s. Europe receded a little (...) and only came to the fore once again with the project of monetary union' (Hoffmann 2013).

After the decision on national economic, currency and social union the eastern German trade unions were left with 'Hobson's choice', namely merging with their western German counterparts. Organisational unification led to a membership explosion, boosting the

DGB's ranks from just below 8 million in 1990 to 11.8 million in 1991. In the following years, however, membership declined continuously, at first mainly due to eastern German de-industrialisation. Later on the fall in membership spilled over to western parts of Germany. Already at the end of the 1990s the DGB's membership had returned to where it stood before unification (Ebbinghaus, Armingeon and Hassel 2000: 295–299). In 2011 the DGB counted altogether 6.15 million members including 2.24 million members of IG Metall, 2.07 million members of Ver.di and 0.67 million members of IG BCE.¹²

The changes in primary law proceeding almost parallel with this at European level were considerable at this time: with the inclusion of Art. 118b in the EC Treaty by the Single European Act in 1987 the promotion of social dialogue became an official task of the Commission: 'The Commission shall endeavour to develop the dialogue between management and labour at European level which could, if the two sides consider it desirable, lead to relations based on agreement.' This obligation was reinforced by the Community Charter of Fundamental Social Rights of 1989, the Maastricht Social Protocol and the revised EC Treaty adopted in Amsterdam in 1997. A key novelty was Art. 139 EC Treaty which provides that 'should management and labour so desire, the dialogue between them at the Community level may lead to contractual relations, including agreements' (Kowalsky 1999: 383ff).

If one examines the conference minutes, annual reports and position papers of the DGB and its individual trade unions during the 1990s it becomes clear that although the issue of Europe was dutifully addressed it was side-lined in favour of current issues and the social problems arising from German unification. Exceptions included the completion of the European Single Market and eastern enlargement, both of which gave rise to fears of social dumping, reflected in an upsurge in motions at trade union conferences during this decade. The fact that the social *acquis* was established on a weaker basis than the economic union was an object of constant criticism and calls for improvement. Against this background, although the DGB and its member trade unions generally advocated the development of European integration, in the 1990s they warned that a united Europe risked becoming an elite project, not fully democratic, and urged further development of social policy. Typical DGB assertions to this end include: 'The German Trade Union Confederation's approval of economic and monetary union remains dependent on how it is organised and implemented' and called on the German government to ensure that 'employment policy and employment goals (...) are enshrined in the Treaty' and that 'the fundamental right to cross-border freedom of association and the social protocol (...) are components of the Treaty'.¹³ Also illustrative is the wording of a DGB position paper of 2000: 'Europe's economic and political integration has made great strides since the end of the 1980s. The Single Market and the common currency must now be complemented with a common economic policy and the creation of a European social area with full employment, equal opportunities and fundamental social rights.'¹⁴

At the beginning of the new century the DGB together with the ETUC focused on two major challenges: the first was the strong support for the work of the European Convention that drafted the Charter of Fundamental Rights. Against the backdrop of earlier claims for a codification of social rights the DGB edited during the work of the Convention

12. Author's calculation based on DGB statistics.

13. Resolution by the DGB national executive, 8 April 1997.

14. DGB position paper, 7 November 2000.

a special newsletter to inform interested circles. Later, the DGB campaigned in favour of a European Constitution. After the rejection of the Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe the DGB supported a position threatening that trade unions would campaign against the revised EU if the Charter were not made legally binding. The defeat of the ‘country of origin’-principle laid down in the so-called ‘Bolkestein directive’ (Services directive) – again in strong alliance with the ETUC – was another field of activity. The DGB invested heavily in this campaign, which led to a European campaign with several demonstrations.

A number of parallel strategies can be discerned on the part of the German trade unions since the 1990s. Given its limited resources the DGB has opted for both representation in the ETUC and establishing its own advocacy at the European level as counterpart (Buschak 2013). This strategy follows two main aims: one is centralised negotiations within the social dialogue and its development, although the German unions were quite clear that there was hardly any chance for collective wage bargaining and other core policies if the employers were unwilling. The other aim was to coordinate free collective bargaining and information exchange within the sectoral trade union federations but also regional cooperation in border regions. German trade unions have played a decisive role in establishing cross-border coordination networks, designing approaches and coordination rules for the different European industry federations and the ETUC.

Another area in which the German trade unions have been active within the framework of their Europeanisation strategy is personnel policy: in the persons of Willy Buschak and Reiner Hoffmann – but also others – from the early 1990s two younger trade unionists, with a sound academic background and well versed in other languages, took office at the ETUC and the ETUI and for more than a decade drove both substantive work and academic documentation and analysis. The ETUI during this period took on the role – in substantial cooperation with the German trade unions – of a ‘policy advisor’ in relation to the European Trade Union Confederation, which adopted resolutions based on the preparatory work of the ETUI. With regard to substantive work, the ‘EWC directive’ on European works councils, in pursuit of the goal of ‘transnational codetermination’, was particularly important (Hertwig, Pries and Rampelshammer 2009; Hauser-Ditz, Hertwig, Pries and Rampeltshammer 2010).

From the standpoint of the ETUC and the ETUI the most important contacts with regard to German workers were the DGB and the Hans-Böckler-Stiftung; at the same time, however, efforts were made with the most important individual trade unions – for example, IG Metall, Ver.di (public services), IG Bergbau Chemie Energie [Mining, Chemicals, Energy] (IG BCE), IG Bauen-Agrar-Umwelt [Construction, Agriculture, Environment] (IG BAU) and their precursors, as well as with the Deutsche Angestellten-Gewerkschaft [Salaried Employees’ Union] (DAG) – to maintain regular contact (Buschak 2013; Hoffmann 2013). On the German side, attention to Brussels increased constantly during this period. Thus Reiner Hoffmann, for example, as head of research promotion at the Hans-Böckler-Stiftung up to the end of the 1980s, began to organise seminars for students in Brussels, initially for those with Hans-Böckler-Stiftung scholarships. But joint events with trade unions from the Netherlands and Italy, at which labour market policies were addressed from a German perspective in discussion groups from other countries, became increasingly important (Hoffmann 2013). The major issues of this period, besides the EWC Directive, included the Directive on a general framework for information and consultation of employees, the amendment of the merger regulation, as well as new forms of labour organisation (subcontracting, divesting companies), the Takeover directive and the interrelationship between environmental protection and labour market policy (Buschak 2013).

Within the DGB the ‘Europe working group’, in which individual trade unions co-operated, acquired a certain coordinative function, preparing activities and even working out positions on the legislative initiatives of the European Commission (Hoffmann 2013). Besides the meetings of the Europe working group coordinated by the international department within the DGB administration, gatherings of the EU representatives of individual trade unions and meetings of individual working groups – for example, the ‘European Single Market’ working group – played an important role with regard to trade unions’ European policy.

Reiner Hoffmann, who was elected deputy general secretary of the ETUC on the proposal of the DGB at the ETUC conference in Prague in May 2003, and re-elected at the conference in Seville in May 2007, describes the growing confidence of these years as follows:

The German trade unions and many other trade unions in Europe were always very pro-European, much more pro-European than many political parties, including the SPD, so that we were already – both programmatically and structurally – ahead of political parties. It is by no means presumptuous to say that even today political parties, at least in terms of organisational structures, have nothing comparable to the ETUC. Although we have the PES or the S&D, which is its name as a party group in the EP, the integration is much looser than in the case of the ETUC. (Hoffmann 2013)

This assertion is in marked contrast to the verdicts of previous decades in which former IG Metall chairman Franz Steinkühler still talked of the ETUC as a trade union ‘paper tiger’ in Brussels and SPD general secretary Peter Glotz referred to it as just a ‘trade union office’ (Kowalsky 2009: 257).

In the 1990s, however, the DGB and individual trade unions did not confine themselves to cooperation with the ETUC, but pursued other strategies, too. While at the outset of the single-market debate the DGB took the view that the common market, in terms of the so-called Hallstein¹⁵ paradigm of ‘*Sachlogik*’ (‘material logic’¹⁶), would also lead to stronger cultural and social integration and thus to some extent automatically bolster cooperation at European level. When this did not transpire it developed European policy alternatives in its programmatic assertions and demands and pursued its own interests in Brussels more keenly. The decision made by the DGB national executive in summer 1997 to support its European policy activities by setting up a DGB Brussels liaison office is particularly important in this context. This followed the example of the postal union, which had been running its own office in Brussels for some time or more recently IG Metall opening its own representative office in Brussels in 2014. In the first decade of the twenty-first century the DGB repeatedly supported campaigns at European level, both from Düsseldorf and Berlin, but also from Brussels – most importantly, those in 2006 in Berlin, Brussels and Strasbourg against the so-called EU services directive.

The sectoral level can also be identified as an arena of interaction for the German trade unions. Thorsten Schulten and Reinhard Bispinck have documented – in an anthology full of valuable material – that the European metal-workers’ trade unions in particular

15. Walter Hallstein was the first president of the ECC Commission. Later he attracted academic attention with his book *Der unvollendete Bundesstaat*. See for details Loth 1995.

16. Note: One might also translate it as the ‘logic of the case’: the idea is that people would be compelled to take a particular line regardless of their personal inclinations because the situation dictated it.

have developed a wide range of approaches to sectorally coordinated collective bargaining. Within the framework of interregional collective bargaining partnerships various IG Metall regions cooperate with trade unions from neighbouring countries; the European Metal-workers' Federation has also set up a European collective bargaining committee and an information network for collective bargaining. Other trade union federations have pursued this coordination approach, for example, the chemical and construction industries, whose coordination efforts differ significantly. While IG Metall focuses on joint collective bargaining committees, IG BCE regularly sends observers to collective negotiations abroad; IG BAU, by contrast, works with the employers to monitor the labour market to counteract social dumping by means of minimum standards.

Among the industry trade unions, however, critical voices have emerged, especially in the past decade or so, when the EU's constitutionalisation and substantive deepening processes have been seriously compromised by the failed referendums in the Netherlands and France. For example, in October 2007 IG Metall presented a 'European policy memorandum', at an international conference convened by the Otto-Brenner-Stiftung in Budapest, in which mention was made of a severe crisis facing the EU and a 'devastating outcome'.¹⁷ There was criticism of the fact that the EU is far from achieving the ambitious goals it set itself in the so-called Lisbon Strategy. However, IG Metall did not conclude from this that there should be 'less Europe' because 'a trade union policy concerned only with nation-states would be neither desirable nor successful'. It called instead for a new flagship project, 'the active shaping of a renewed European social model'. IG Metall also prescribed a 'reinforced European policy practice that should be self-evident at all organisational levels'. This included the continuation and consolidation of existing transnational trade union networks and the development of a capability to campaign across Europe. The demand to intensify trade union commitment at all levels may also be a result of the – for trade unions rather disappointing – top-down policy of 'social dialogue'. Within this framework, although some proposed directives were implemented, core trade union issues – such as wages and working time – remained largely untouched. The main reason for this is the basic rejection of transnational collective agreements by employers' organisations, not to mention the fact that most trade union peak organisations do not have the authority to sign collective agreements.

As the monetary union was being implemented, various national trade unions took the initiative to establish Europe-wide coordination and networking of national collective bargaining. Pioneers in this respect were the German, Dutch, Belgian and Luxembourgian trade unions (with representatives of sectoral trade union organisations, as well as the peak organisations) that met in the Dutch town of Doorn in September 1998. The so-called 'Doorn declaration' referred to the need for close cross-border coordination of collective agreements within the Economic and Monetary Union and adopted the sum of rises in prices and productivity as guideline for wage increases. A year later, the ETUC, which had established a committee for coordinating collective bargaining in 1999, adopted the collective bargaining guideline agreed in Doorn for national wage negotiations. However, this guideline to date has had only a limited influence on national collective bargaining outcomes; even Germany has remained markedly behind the distribution target.

17. IG Metall executive (ed.): 'Für ein solidarisch erneuertes Europa' [For a renewal of Europe on the basis of solidarity]. Draft of a European policy memorandum, IG Metall, Frankfurt am Main, 2007.

Against the background of the Doorn process, the IG Metall Collective Bargaining Department initiated proposals for cross-border collective bargaining networks as early as 1997. Various district organisations of IG Metall developed networks with unions from neighbouring countries. These transnational networks have been established, for example, with Dutch and Belgian unions in the IG Metall district of North Rhine-Westphalia. Other networks came into being between the IG Metall districts Hesse, Rhineland-Palatinate and Saarland and the French CFDT, CGT and FO. Networks involving central and eastern European countries have also been established between the Bavarian IG Metall, Austrian, Slovene, Slovak and Czech unions. Another network with central and eastern European participation has evolved between IG Metall Brandenburg-Saxony/Berlin, the Polish NSZZ Solidarnosz and the Czech KOWO.

In a first step, the aim of transnational coordination was to encourage mutual knowledge and information in order to develop solutions for regional problems concerning the labour market and collective bargaining by the exchange of observers. The second step, which followed in 1999, extended cooperation to joint planning of collective bargaining strategies and within that, real transnational coordination of bargaining procedures. Besides the efforts of the European metalworker's network, interregional bargaining networks have developed in the construction and chemical industries, for example between Austrian, Swiss and German construction workers' unions and between IG BCE and its French counterpart, triggered by mergers in the pharmaceutical industry.

The fact that transnational trade union cooperation also has a bilateral component became particularly clear in the 1990s. The German trade unions – especially the DGB, but also IG Metall and IG CPK – were heavily involved in central and eastern Europe when support was needed to develop levels of collective bargaining and expand works councils. A decisive experience in this respect was that in countries such as Hungary and Poland there were similar reservations with regard to works councils as there had been in Germany after 1949. The trade unions did not want to support works councils because they regarded them as competitors.

The enlargement processes of the ETUC with regard to central and eastern Europe have been broadly supported by the DGB and the German trade unions. Besides bilateral support for some countries and trade unions the accession of new federations was considered indispensable (Hoffmann 2013). Consequently, the DGB supported the idea of a reduced membership fee for the new trade unions of the ETUC due their limited resources for the time being – the new affiliates from CEE countries only needed to pay around 25 per cent of the regular fee.¹⁸

Considering the developments of the second decade of the twenty-first century the general positions and strategies of Germany's trade unions vis-à-vis European integration have not changed substantially – not even in view of financial crisis and recession. Different from countries such as the United Kingdom or some central and eastern European states where a trend toward renationalisation and centrifugal forces can be identified among the trade unions due to unfilled expectations and hopes, German trade unions continue to support European integration (Hoffmann 2013; Buschak 2013). Although the DGB has realised that its current influence in the growing network of the ETUC remains to some extent limited when it comes to promoting the specific German-type of codetermination in Europe,

18. Cf. Financial Report 2003-06.

integration is still considered a *raison d'être* of the German trade union overall. Consequently, many DGB officials have stressed, during the course of the crisis, the importance of joint solidarity-based resolutions. It has been claimed that the ETUC needed to reinforce its common striving for social progress and fair mobility within Europe, both at national and European level. In 2011 at the Athens ETUC Congress the DGB fostered the idea that the ETUC should strengthen its work on board-level representation. The DGB was one of the driving forces behind the setting up of an ETUC expert group which after long discussions finally agreed on the main principles of a joint and unanimous ETUC position laid down in a resolution of October 2014 which for the first time took a stance in favour of workers' representation on company boards.

4. Interpretations and outlooks

No clear picture emerges from a summary of German trade unions' European policy approaches and activities. There are both overarching commonalities and basic tendencies, and also differences with regard to details: concerning the former, attention has increasingly been paid to policy formation at the European level with the aim of participating actively in the European policy cycle. This increased awareness with regard to 'Brussels' has been an ongoing trend among German trade unions since the early 1950s, which gained in intensity in the 1970s and then again after the establishment of the Single Market in the 1990s. The underlying trends include a fundamentally pro-European stance. Even if the DGB and individual German trade unions at certain times, in particular problem areas and with regard to individual decisions adopt a reluctant or hesitant approach, they are basically in favour of European integration and have always supported further development and deepening of the process. It is worth highlighting that the DGB recently helped to formulate two principles for the future of social policy: (i) to promote as a last resort a coalition of the willing in order to avoid total standstill and (ii) to support the potential threat of the ETUC to oppose treaty revisions whenever they do not support social progress.

Even if increased attention to the European level is something the German trade unions have in common, no uniform pattern of responses has emerged in relation to institutional, organisational and programmatic adjustment processes. The German trade unions have not pursued a particular strategy, nor can a development in this direction be discerned. This also applies to national trade unions from other nations. Different countries have different approaches to the European codetermination system in terms of adaptation and participation. The ways of seeking influence in Brussels also differ considerably. There is a fundamental tendency to seek one's own access to the European political cycle.

The DGB's activities are strongly oriented towards basic issues, aspects of constitutional development, inter-branch legislation on the part of the EU and also the manifold 'soft' forms of governance, such as the open method of coordination, the Lisbon Strategy and the tripartite social dialogue. In contrast the European branch trade unions focus more particularly on the political economy of EU integration and problem areas, such as monetary union, branch liberalisation and important labour policy regulations, such as the directive on establishing European works councils and the sectoral social dialogue, which directly affects their spheres of interest (Platzer 2010: 5).

The pro-integration attitude of German trade unions can be explained by the post-war situation, but also economic reasons. While the DGB was shaped primarily by the

need for political coordination at the European level, the unions within the coal and steel industries were concerned mainly with economic considerations. In the following decades, German unions established themselves as precursors of integration, although their attitudes and decisions in concrete cases were driven mainly by specific interests. As a result of new challenges due to multinational companies, rising unemployment and decreasing growth rates due to economic interdependence and the macroeconomic crisis of the 1970s, the need for cooperation at the European level increased. However, the German unions suffered setbacks with regard to their ambitions concerning the future role and composition of the ETUC. German trade unions found it hard to agree on European regulations when it came to the first legal acts on European social policy, which was due to the DGB itself to a certain extent. While the German trade unions longed for institutional influence – for example within the European Economic and Social Committee and other committees, such as Commission working groups – they mainly (depending on which kind of European regulation, and what kind of competences) refused to agree to European regulations and to shift competences to the European level. However, even though the founding of the ETUC was influenced mainly by British and Nordic unions, it was still a key interest of the German unions to establish strong ties with the European level. This is even truer with regard to sectoral organisations, in which German unions have participated since the establishment of the European Coal and Steel Community. Such transnational bargaining deepened in the 1990s and continues today, although not without certain difficulties.

The completion of the common market and its effects on the global economy strengthened the pressure to coordinate policies within the system of European trade unions, although the German unions still had a strong basis at national level. The tide turned in the 1990s with Germany's unification, when the impacts of globalisation and Europeanisation, but also of specific national problems, such as the decreasing coverage of collective bargaining agreements, shrinking membership rates and rising unemployment brought new challenges for the labour movement (Serrano, Xhafa and Fichter 2011). The resources of the German unions at that time were tied to structural adaptation at the national level, the need to reorganise eastern German labour structures and merger processes within unions.

The German trade unions' adaptation strategies vary every bit as much as their policy positions. While in the 1950s and 1960s the emphasis was on participation in the European institutions, in the 1970s the ETUC came to the fore as coordinator of trade union activities in European policy. It rapidly became apparent that representation via the ETUC would not be exclusive. To date the DGB and individual German trade unions have been characterised in their European policy activities by a 'multi-options strategy' in the multi-level system. One form of access to Brussels has not been pursued to the exclusion of the others, but rather several strategies are deployed at different levels. For example, the DGB and the individual trade unions both looked for their own particular route to Brussels and continued to cooperate with other trade union federations in the ETUC. Influence was thus sought primarily in Brussels at the European level but from time to time also via national channels in Bonn and Berlin. This became apparent in the 1970s when there was closer cooperation with the SPD-led national government.

The development of European employment policy as a first step towards social policy at the European level at the beginning of the 1970s was triggered by economic developments, when the international economic regime of Bretton Woods, which had been very successful until then, failed to compensate for the effects of the oil crises and their influence

on national economies, with well-known consequences for the labour and product markets. In order to avoid further negative discussions on public welfare, to solve problems with multinationals and migrant workers within the EEC and to regain direct influence over decisions relating to labour interests, the unions fostered an initiative on social policy launched by the German government.

The negotiations on a specific European model of industrial relations – comparable to the different national systems – always remained open. Neither the ETUC nor the ETUFs are yet homogenous enough to deal with core issues of union policy, such as wage agreements. And it is questionable whether they ever will be. The opportunities given by committees at the European level and the social dialogue are still limited, although the social partners evolved in the course of the social dialogue particularly in the aftermath of the treaties of Maastricht and Amsterdam. There are also paths of influence through advisory committees within the framework of comitology, the ESC and the Employment Committee. Furthermore, the Social Rights Charter of 1989 and the directives negotiated within the social dialogue contain minimum standards and employment rights, although joint approaches with the directive for European works councils – for example, towards European labour relations at plant level – can be seen.

The prevalent thesis, whether trade unions have to be evaluated as latecomers in the process of European integration – though they started as forerunners – does not point to an unequivocal picture of the German unions. Despite phases of reluctance and hesitance the ongoing adaptation of German trade unions in view of European integration from the beginning, when the European Coal and Steel Community was established, is a persistent characteristic. In general, the traditional corporatist orientation of the German unions fits well the terms of neo-corporatist intermediation structures at European level. Although attempts to obtain institutional influence fell short of unions' demands and expectations, they managed to influence European employment, social and even economic policy to a certain extent. In considering the limits of national trade union adaptation the specific circumstances in Germany have to be taken into consideration: on one hand, economic reasons resulting from Germany's role as the biggest economy in Europe with a stable, successful and highly developed export-oriented industry, and on the other hand the traditional, centralised and corporatist model of industrial relations in Germany, which became a stable and beneficial system over a long period of time.

The thesis that treaty changes at the European level were a driving force for the European orientation of German trade unions also seems to be superficial because it broadly disregards their role as economic stakeholders. In fact, German unions geared their efforts mainly to the opportunities granted by the European treaties, but their engagement was triggered by political and economic premises. In the first period they acted within the institutional structures of labour representation provided by the European Coal and Steel Community – mainly the Advisory Committee and the High Authority – while their own structures aimed at interest intermediation and coordination between the unions in the ECSC member states. With the foundation of the European Economic Community, the opportunities for labour representation decreased within the Economic and Social Committee. Sectoral structures were inefficient during that time and thus the German unions focused on institutional representation and tried to influence the European dimension of various national governments. Efforts to create an efficient multi-sectoral structure in ECFTU and ETUC were not as successful as had been expected due to the need to compromise with other unions. In general, treaty reforms can be considered an important trajectory of

transnationalisation, as German unions reacted to new structures and the increasing scope of the European Community at that time. But the treaties must also be seen as political outcomes. The well-informed German unions tried to implement their ideas from the very beginning, in keeping with their level of influence and intensity of interest. The engagement of the German trade unions ebbed and flowed depending on their economic, social and political needs, on one hand, and on the opportunities for intermediation offered by the treaties on the other, including interaction with other actors such as the Commission, national governments and other unions. Given the different characteristics of national political decision-making, assertions about future or optimal adaptation and participation models make only limited sense because such conclusions are possible only in the context of the relevant constitutional-law, institutional and political spheres, sometimes only in light of the relevant policy area. Long-held positions, such as those that consider centralised, strongly hierarchical structures – for example, the UK or French systems – to be more successful than federal systems, such as Germany, with its pluralistic, fragmented, decentralised and non-hierarchical structures, appear to be tenable only to a limited degree, according to recent research. The adaptability of national trade union positions can be explained less in terms of strictly hierarchical coordination and more in terms of a broadly distributed and intensive participation. Germany, with its pluralistic structures, thus seems to fit better into a pluralist system like that of the European Union. Consequently, trade unions have to combine plant-level, national, transnational, intergovernmental and supranational elements in order to become successful players in Europe’s multi-level system.

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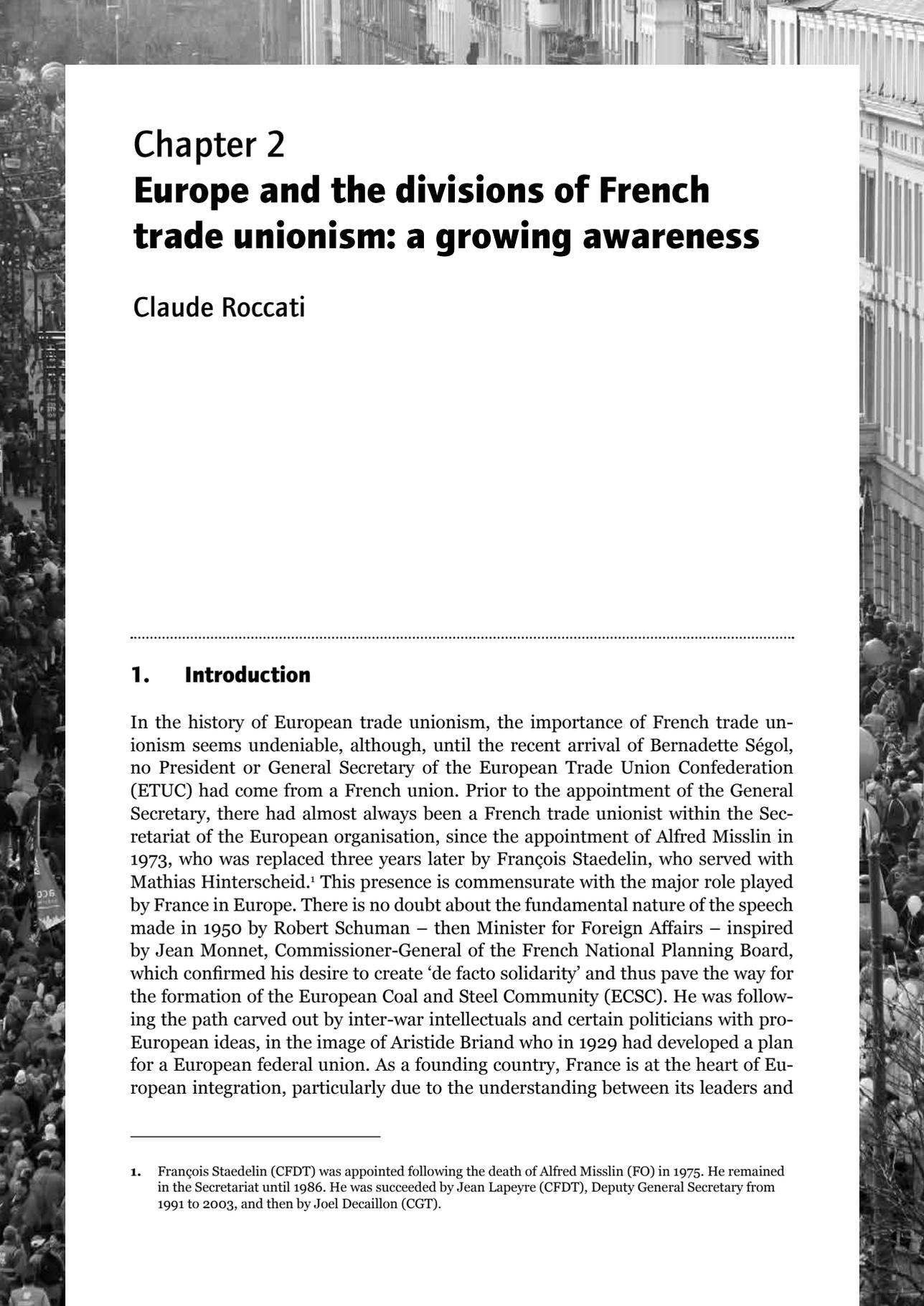
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Interviews

- (Hoffmann 2013) **Reiner Hoffmann** (born 1955) has been a member of IG Chemie-Papier-Keramik (since 1997 IG Bergbau, Chemie, Energie) since 1972. After studying in Wuppertal, an internship at the ETUC in Brussels and a period working at the European Community's Economic and Social Committee in Brussels and as research assistant at the University of Wuppertal, from 1984 he worked at the Hans-Böckler-Stiftung, becoming head of the research promotion department until 1994. **From October 1994 to May 2003 he was director of the European Trade Union Institute (ETUI), then up to December 2009 deputy general secretary of the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC).** From November 2009 to January 2014 he was head of the IG BCE's North Rhine district. In February 2014 he was elected to the DGB's national executive. In January 2014 he was nominated for the position of chair of the DGB. Our interview took place on 6 November 2013, 9.30–11.30 in Düsseldorf.
- (Buschak 2013) **Willy Buschak** (born 1951) attained a PhD after studying history and philosophy at the Ruhr University in Bochum in 1982 with a dissertation on the trade union's London office. Between 1987 and 1991 he worked at the central administration of the German Trade Union for Food, Beverages and Restaurant Workers in Hamburg, where he was responsible for all matters related to worker involvement. **In 1991 he became confederal secretary of the European Trade Union Confederation, remaining in Brussels in a number of roles and areas of activity for 12 years.** From 2003 to 2008 Buschak was deputy Director and for a period also acting Director of the European Foundation in Dublin. Since 2009 Buschak has been responsible for basic issues at the DGB's Saxony district in Dresden. The interview took place on 21 November 2013, 18.00–20.00. It was a telephone interview with further additions and amendments.



Chapter 2

Europe and the divisions of French trade unionism: a growing awareness

Claude Roccati

1. Introduction

In the history of European trade unionism, the importance of French trade unionism seems undeniable, although, until the recent arrival of Bernadette Ségol, no President or General Secretary of the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) had come from a French union. Prior to the appointment of the General Secretary, there had almost always been a French trade unionist within the Secretariat of the European organisation, since the appointment of Alfred Mislin in 1973, who was replaced three years later by François Staedelin, who served with Mathias Hinterscheid.¹ This presence is commensurate with the major role played by France in Europe. There is no doubt about the fundamental nature of the speech made in 1950 by Robert Schuman – then Minister for Foreign Affairs – inspired by Jean Monnet, Commissioner-General of the French National Planning Board, which confirmed his desire to create ‘de facto solidarity’ and thus pave the way for the formation of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC). He was following the path carved out by inter-war intellectuals and certain politicians with pro-European ideas, in the image of Aristide Briand who in 1929 had developed a plan for a European federal union. As a founding country, France is at the heart of European integration, particularly due to the understanding between its leaders and

1. François Staedelin (CFDT) was appointed following the death of Alfred Mislin (FO) in 1975. He remained in the Secretariat until 1986. He was succeeded by Jean Lapeyre (CFDT), Deputy General Secretary from 1991 to 2003, and then by Joel Decaillon (CGT).

their German counterparts. France is therefore in a position to design a Europe matching its ambitions, a Europe of resolutely anti-American states in the time of Charles de Gaulle, but more liberal under his successors, Georges Pompidou and Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, who worked to enlarge and deepen Europe. François Mitterrand, even though his majority included communists hostile to the European project, contributed to the shaping of Europe by refusing to guide the Community towards socialism and instead favouring the formation of a European Union, as well as by encouraging the work of Jacques Delors up to the adoption of the Maastricht Treaty.

However, the referendum held at that time revealed that, aside from the choice of leaders, French society is far more ambivalent: the 'yes' camp won only narrowly, highlighting that France as a country was not unanimous about Europe. Between the 1930s and 1950s, a strongly pro-European attitude took hold, however, supported by the Christian Democrats, Liberals and some Socialists. The latter formed a number of movements, ranging from the Socialist Movement for the United States of Europe to the Action Committee for the United States of Europe, set up by Jean Monnet. However, there has long been a kaleidoscope of critical political forces on both the right and the left, from Gaullists to communists. Although the French have been able to accept abandoning part of their sovereignty to the European project in order to maintain France's place on the world stage, their resolve fluctuates. If the price to be paid is deemed too high, opponents can see their ranks suddenly swell, for a number of reasons, from nationalist repudiation to fears of social waivers, leading them on occasion to form a 'nation-brake' (Manigand 2007: 43). Since the mid-1980s, in an unfavourable economic context, the European Union has also become the catalyst for a number of concerns. It is not so much the European ideal that is on the wane, but rather the various forms of European integration, as demonstrated vividly by the debates during the referendum campaign on the adoption of a European Constitution. The debates were most extensive within the Socialist Party: sympathisers in the party rejected, by a majority, a referendum that the internal consultation had supported. This limited majority of 58 per cent revealed the 'historical crossover' between socialist and Gaullist voters; from then on, the sceptics were more numerous among the former than the latter (Dulphy and Manigand 2006: 56–57).

The trade union world has not escaped these developments and the approach taken by individual French unions in terms of supporting the European project and establishing the ETUC reflects the diversity of paths. The various unions have joined the European confederation at different times, in line with an evolving perception of Europe. They include CGT-FO – which we will refer to as 'FO' hereafter – which was associated with the Western camp and unconditional support for the United States and was also a participant in the foundation of the ETUC as a member of the European Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ECFTU), which is the European branch of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU); CFDT, whose pro-European sympathies have constantly increased over time; and CGT, which for a long time remained on the sidelines, but whose critical posturing did not prevent it from eventually joining the ETUC in 1999.²

Does their joint presence in the European organisation now signal the convergence of their positions on Europe? By assessing their European ambitions over time and their

2. Although the ETUC now includes five French unions (CFDT, CGT, FO, CFTC and UNSA) – not counting the FSU whose trade unions are affiliated to the European Trade Union Committee for Education – we have chosen to focus on the three main French unions as their development is most representative of the French trade unions' relationship with Europe.

perception of their role within the ETUC we will be able to answer this question. Following a presentation of French trade unionism assessing the influence of its individual unions, we will look first at views on European integration, particularly by highlighting the times when the French population has been consulted and by placing trade union views within the French context. We will then detail the investment of the various organisations in the ETUC.³

2. Brief overview of French trade unionism

Trade union membership is not compulsory in France. Most trade unions offer workers a choice of membership, but this has not resulted in a high rate of unionisation, which, for the past 20 years or so has been around 7–8 per cent. This rate poses a question about the place of trade unions in France, with marked differences between the public and private sectors. Half of all trade union members work in public service or in a public undertaking, particularly in health, transport, La Poste and France Telecom. Only 5 per cent of employees in the private sector have a union card, mostly in metallurgy and energy (Andolfatto 2004: 166–167). Given this low rate, the relative importance of the French trade unions is now measured more by their results in union elections.

Two organisations dominate the French trade union landscape, accounting for 26.77 per cent and 26 per cent of votes in the 2013 union elections, respectively: the CGT and the CFDT.⁴ They are the heirs of the two main traditions that have structured the French workers' movement since the legalisation of trade unions in 1884 by the Waldeck-Rousseau Act (Pernot 2010: 69–103). This allowed the creation of the Confédération Générale du Travail (CGT) in 1895, which brought together within one movement reformist, Marxist and anarchist activists calling for strict independence from political movements and defending a secular and socialist trade unionism. The second arm of the French workers' movement developed at the same time within the sphere of social Catholicism and resulted in the creation of a Confédération Française des Syndicats Chrétiens (CFTC) in 1919. This was immediately affiliated to the International Federation of Christian Trade Unions (IFCTU), which helped to set it up. It contained a group of non-mixed Christian trade unions – 'non-mixed' meaning that they did not combine employers and workers – the most important of which was the Syndicat des employés du commerce et de l'industrie, founded in 1887. Formally independent of the Church, its members declared in their articles of association that they were inspired by the encyclical *Rerum Novarum*.

The CFTC then became the CFDT, following a decision by the vast majority of its members to make the union non-denominational by removing any Christian reference from its name and articles of association, in order to open it up to the entire working world. This

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3. Several types of archive have been used to conduct this study. In addition to the dossiers on relations with the French unions held by the International Institute of Social History (IISH), we have referred to trade union archive centres. We are extremely grateful to the archivists and documentalists who enabled us to find the necessary documents: Annie Kuhnmann, Nicolas Perrais, Aurélie Mazet and Pascale Rubin. Given the eclectic nature of the sources, which vary from one organisation to another, we have chosen to favour, in addition to the study of affiliation conditions, congress texts and the trade union press. Particular thanks are owed to Pierre Tilly for giving us access to the declassified archives of the US Department of State.
 4. Figures provided by the Ministry of Labour, Employment, Vocational Training and Social Dialogue in its press release of 29 March 2013.

transformation in 1964 marked the completion of a long process of change: the organisation had been turned upside down by the arrival of a new generation of activists who rejected the 'class collaboration' advocated by their elders. It was from then on that the organisation, which had been a minority player in the first third of the twentieth century, grew rapidly and began to compete with the CGT.

During this period, the CGT went from between 2.3 and 3 million members in the early 1950s to 1.8 million in 1978 and 600,000 today (figure provided by Pernot 2010: 199). In particular, like all the main French confederations, the distribution of members has changed: whereas in the past manual workers made up most of the members, deindustrialisation and changes in the French economy mean that these organisations attract fewer and fewer such workers. They now account for no more than one-third of members, having been increasingly replaced by white-collar workers, in particular teachers, technicians, managers and engineers. As a result, in 1998 27 per cent of CGT members belonged to this category (Andolfatto 2004: 24). Furthermore, around a quarter of its members come from one of the five main public undertakings (SNCF, EDF, GDF, RATP, La Poste) and more than half are public officials or similar (Pernot 2010: 195).

Its mass nature was called into question when FO was set up by activists denouncing the hold over the CGT exercised by the French Communist Party (PCF), itself under the orders of Moscow, in a Cold War context. Inspired by socialism but opposed to communism, this new union brought together a wide variety of activists, from Trotskyists, through the heirs of anarcho-syndicalism to moderate socialists, which gave it multiple faces. Very small to start with, the new union stabilised only in the mid-1950s, in particular by gaining a foothold in the public sector, before diversifying its recruitment and becoming the third largest French union, with just under 400,000 members (Andolfatto 2004: 25).

FO has developed its position as polar opposite to that of the CGT and CFDT, highlighting its independence from political parties and differentiating itself from those unions in which the social arena has long been subordinated to the political arena and whose leaders have been members of the PCF's political bureau. Nowadays, however, all unions claim strict independence from political parties. Even before the creation of the CFDT, activists in the CFTC ensured that any links with the Christian Democrat Party – the MRP, of which a number of representatives in the National Assembly in the immediate post-war period were also senior officials in the trade union – were broken by banning members of the bureau and confederal secretariat from cumulatively holding any local or national political office or management position within a party. The CGT also distanced itself from the Communist Party as the party got weaker, with Louis Viannet's decision in 1996 to resign from the bureau of the PCF symbolically marking the break in direct relations between the political and trade union managements (de Comarmond 2013: 17–65). However, this claimed independence and the fact of allowing members to vote freely – more often than not – do not prevent these organisations from taking part in the political debate.

In view of their membership numbers, stated independence from employers, financing mainly stemming from member contributions, seniority and patriotic attitude during the Occupation (criteria defined since 1945), the CGT, FO and CFDT came to be regarded as representative, allowing them to negotiate and sign agreements 'on behalf of all workers', in the same way as the Confédération Générale des Cadres (CFE-CGC) and the CFTC, which were formed by activists who did not agree with making the unions non-denominational and who wanted to maintain a Christian trade unionism based on the social principles of Christianity. In 1968, when exercise of the right to organise in the workplace was recognised

by law, any trade union affiliated to these organisations had to be recognised as representative within companies or one of their establishments before obtaining the right to negotiate and conclude collective labour agreements and contracts at this level (Auroux laws).

This measurement of representativeness raised a number of questions at a time when social dialogue was being pursued at an increasingly decentralised level and the trade unions were less and less present, weakening the legitimacy of the collective agreements concluded (Pernot 2010: 314–315). As a result, in 2008 it was decided to measure representativeness according to the results of union elections (mainly works councils and staff representatives) and to set the threshold of representativeness at 10 per cent of votes for exercising the rights of the trade union section and at 8 per cent at aggregate branch level in order to be represented and negotiate, with the representativeness of a number of branches ensuring interprofessional representation. The collective bargaining rules were also amended: whereas previously agreements were valid provided that one signatory was a member of a representative organisation, these could no longer be concluded without the backing of trade unions representing at least 30 per cent of employees' votes and provided that a coalition with more than 50 per cent of the votes did not object.

Those organisations that existed solely at branch level – such as teachers' trade unions – were also recognised as representative. Teachers were long represented by the Fédération de l'Éducation Nationale (FEN), which was formed in 1947 as an independent organisation to avoid having to choose between FO and CGT. They are now mainly represented by the Fédération Syndicale Unitaire (FSU), several of whose affiliated trade unions are members of the European Trade Union Committee for Education. On the other hand, the 2008 reform had an ambiguous effect on small organisations. It made it easier for them to stand for election to works councils, whereas the previous system had banned them from such elections. However, frequently below the 10 per cent threshold, they struggle to exercise trade union rights at grassroots level. Among them, the SUD unions, founded in the late 1980s by activists from the CFDT for La Poste and France Telecom workers because they were disappointed by the union's shift towards an increasingly accepted reformism, are finding things difficult.⁵ Influenced by libertarian ideas, they place great importance on grassroots initiatives and general assemblies. They are also more like community groups, defending the 'have-nots' (people without jobs, housing, documents and so on), and are committed to alter-globalisation. They represent the most radical pole of the trade union movement and have remained outside the ETUC. Their numbers have stagnated in recent years and, at the last union elections, they failed to reach the 5 per cent threshold. Likewise, the Union Nationale des Syndicats Autonomes (UNSA), which developed from the FEN in the wake of teachers' trade unionism, but which is open to other branches and affiliates independent trade unions, has not managed to achieve this national recognition. Demanding reform, but with a balance of power, it has chosen to position itself explicitly within the area of the reformist left. It joined the ETUC in 1999, due to an agreement signed with the CFDT that gave it one of the latter's two seats on the Executive Committee of the European confederation.⁶

5. Although they were strengthened by the arrival of new members, particularly from transport and education, during the major social mobilisations of 1995 and 2003. For these trade unions, see Connolly (2010).

6. This agreement was essential due to UNSA's non-representativeness at national level.

3. The French trade unions and European integration

3.1. Hostility of the CGT

This diversity of trade unions has resulted in a political kaleidoscope that is evident in the position of each organisation on European integration. In the early years, the CGT was the only trade union strongly opposed to the unification process. The ECSC in particular was perceived as the implementation of a ‘German’ plan in favour of employers in the iron and steel industry (Schirmann 2013: 4) and against the Soviet Union. The common market, described as ‘the economic component of the imperialist alliance that is NATO’ – as Benoît Frachon put it during the WFTU congress in East Berlin in 1962 – was denounced as ‘the arena for the creation of monopolies’ (Pernot 2001b: 156). However, the desire not to be left out after the signing of the Treaty of Rome, combined with pressure from the Soviet Union, forced the CGT to adopt a more pragmatic attitude and accept the proposal of CGIL (Italian General Confederation of Labour) to create a standing committee in Brussels in 1965. The aim was to obtain recognition from the European institutions and beset the continental stage.⁷ Having obtained the right of representation in 1968, which allowed it to become a member of the European Economic and Social Committee and subsequently of the European Commission committees, the CGT has gradually got used to the European institutions. Its involvement in the Franco-Italian bureau has therefore forced it to recognise what it previously disputed: the irreversibility of European integration. However, it refused to encourage a process that could sideline the Soviet world and in its view, as it took shape, Europe seemed to be primarily a weapon aimed at the countries offering ‘real socialism’.

The CGT has made multiple criticisms of European integration. It denounced the enlargement of the EEC to the countries of the Iberian peninsula, which allegedly threatened national production and jeopardised the jobs of French workers:⁸

The CGT opposes any integration that could lead to the abandonment of national sovereignty, as also any enlargement that could accentuate economic and social inequalities, reinforce the power of monopolistic interests and worsen difficulties in the industrial and agricultural sectors and in those regions most sensitive to the crisis.

In the early 1980s the CGT attempted to offer a different approach in Europe that would defend class trade unionism by establishing a ‘forum for social dialogue in western Europe’ with the communist organisations from southern Europe, which had also remained outside the ETUC (CGTP, ESSAK) (Bressol 2006: 131). However, this was mainly an informal structure, without any real capacity for action. At the end of this period, the CGT was highly critical of the Maastricht Treaty because it used ‘Community policies to assist the major multinational groups’, resulting in a ‘Europe of 15 million unemployed ... job insecurity, poverty and social exclusion’.⁹

7. For the history of the CGT-CGIL standing committee, see Pernot (2001a: 331-337).

8. *Compte rendu des travaux du 4^{te} congrès*, 13–18 June 1982 in Lille, ‘document d’action’, p. 781.

9. Statement by the Executive Committee of the CGT, *Pour une Europe répondant aux besoins de tous les salariés, il faut rejeter le traité de Maastricht*, 20 July 1992, Institut CGT d’Histoire Sociale (IHS) 2CFD18.

3.2. CFDT and FO: crossed paths

Unlike the CGT, the CFDT and FO have adopted a much more positive attitude towards European integration, close to that of the socialists, albeit with a number of differences. FO has made acceptance of the European idea a central element of its identity, which has resulted in the omnipresent call for the creation of a 'United States of Europe' that has been repeated at every confederal congress since 1950. In December 1968, Camille Mourgues, who was responsible for international affairs, clarified what the confederation understood by this slogan, during a forum denouncing the recognition of the communist organisations (CGT and CGIL) by the European institutions (Mourgues 1968).

Participating in European integration is not solely about the desire to improve the living conditions of workers in the context of progress. It is also, and in particular, about wanting to build a Europe that is economically, socially and politically integrated, a Europe open to other democratic countries, a Europe that is 'supranational' in nature. In essence it is about wanting a 'United States of Europe' that can guarantee freedom and peace.

Just as FO supported the creation of the ECSC, it backs the process of European integration. It is following in the footsteps of the ICFTU and its defence of the 'free world', given that in its early years it was materially and financially supported by the US trade unions and then by the international confederation.¹⁰ It committed itself to Europe insofar as this appeared to be capable of opposing the communist bloc, whose regimes were regarded as totalitarian and a threat to individual freedoms. That is why it also supported the enlargement of the common market to the United Kingdom.

FO also promotes the creation of a federal Europe, strong enough to impose a social organisation and European collective agreements. It is committed itself to reducing working time at European level when the issue arose on the ETUC agenda. Likewise, FO defends a policy of coordinated recovery, based on an action programme involving public investment in research and facilities and developing the Welfare State. However, when the crisis worsened, it refused to accept that the response should include reducing labour legislation and losing social entitlements (Mourgues 1985). As a result, although the signing of the Single European Act, despite its shortcomings, was presented as real progress towards an integrated Europe, the Maastricht Treaty was not received enthusiastically. When the French Presidency decided to hold a referendum on its adoption, FO officially refused to advise its members on how to vote, by invoking trade union independence, and repeated its call for a social Europe, adopted at its previous congress, which gave the Maastricht negotiations a mixed review, leaving activists to draw their own conclusions.¹¹

The CFDT, on the other hand, fully committed itself to the success of this referendum and its ratification, as a symbol of its defence of European integration. Since the post-war period, the confederation has supported European integration, in which it sees the possibility of building a unique economic and political space. However, it is not satisfied with a 'business Europe', dominated by economic and financial interests, a Europe

10. For further information on this subject, see Régin (2004: 47-52 and 108-109).

11. Statement by the confederal bureau, 31 August 1992, published in *FO Hebdomadaire*, September 1992.

that aims only to form a large market, far removed from the original intentions. The confederation therefore promotes the creation of a supranational political authority that is 'politically controlled', which will ensure 'the social promotion of workers, who are too often neglected'. This means ensuring coordination between European trade unions. Its confederal bureau called for this in 1965, given the prospect of the common market being achieved by 1967.¹² As the crisis deepened, the confederation increasingly advocated a coordinated response at European level. Europe became the priority forum in which all economic and social policies should be developed. The CFDT committed to the ETUC for this reason, arguing that the latter should not simply set common goals, but should organise coherent action for employment, by awareness-raising among workers, organising a European-wide press conference, publishing joint leaflets and together canvassing governments.¹³ At the time, the CFDT still advocated a socialist approach, which was the only one that could guide the construction of a genuine European community, but the European forum had become inescapable:¹⁴

as the situation currently stands in terms of the development of trade and standardisation of living and working conditions in western Europe, any advance made in one country, without parallel advances being made in the other countries, can quickly become fragile and limited.

At the same time as it refocused its approach and softened the reference to socialism, the CFDT made Europe the 'target of its hopes', placing the strengthening of Europe at the heart of its concerns, regardless of the political direction that it might take. It should be noted that, at the same time, Jacques Delors, who for a time had been responsible for the confederation's research office (the BRAEC) at the end of the 1950s, became head of the European Commission. His advisers included a former confederal secretary, employed until 1988 in the Economic and Job Action sector, Patrick Venturini. The CFDT therefore supported his plan for economic recovery by completing the internal market, announced in 1984, and by promoting negotiation. Europe was the only rational economic forum that allowed recourse to negotiation without depending on the state and that also guaranteed that public freedoms would be maintained. The CFDT became an advocate of an integrated Europe that would take precedence over the states. It was not satisfied with a liberal Europe, but considered that the only way of ensuring the social dimension was to achieve 'more Europe' (Pernot 2001a: 572–583).

Every step forward in this respect was therefore perceived as undeniable progress. As a result, the Maastricht summit in December 1991 was welcomed in a statement by the Executive Committee entitled 'Enfin le social dans le train de l'Europe' or 'Finally the social side to the European train'. This was accompanied by an editorial by the CFDT's Secretary General, Jean Kaspar, reiterating an ETUC statement highlighting the 'success of Social Europe' (Kaspar 1991). Paradoxically, the confederation claimed that it would not advise members on how

12. Statement by the confederal bureau, *Marché commun. La CFDT demande au gouvernement français de reprendre les discussions le plus rapidement possible*, July 1965, contained in CFDT document, *Positions sur les problèmes européens* (1950–1965), July 1965, CFDT confederal archives (AC) 8H1844.

13. 'Le congrès de la CES', *Syndicalisme CFDT*, 29 April 1976, pp. 17–18, and letter from R. Salanne to M. Hinterscheid, 24 November 1976, IISH No. 1218.

14. Resolution on international policy at the 38th confederal congress of the CFDT, *Syndicalisme Hebdo*, 17 May 1979, pp. 35–39.

to vote, but came out in favour of ratifying the Treaty, which ‘paved the way’ for ‘mechanisms for action and intervention with the Community bodies, Member States and social actors’.¹⁵

3.3. Debate on the TCE that revealed French ambivalences

The differences of opinion between the French unions emerged once again during the debates on the adoption of the Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe (TCE). One month after Spain, the French government submitted the text to a referendum in May 2005. As with the Maastricht Treaty, the FO confederation, asserting its trade union independence, refused to formally advise on how to vote, but stated that it simply wanted to inform workers. However, its presentation of the Treaty was fairly explicit. The resolution adopted by the confederal committee stated that the Treaty ‘set in stone’ the Stability and Growth Pact and institutionalised a ‘single restrictive economic logic that was harmful to social rights’. The Stability and Growth Pact was the focus of its criticisms for several months and had previously been the subject of a number of accusatory press releases. As an accompaniment to the text, the confederation published a detailed analysis of the Treaty, and in particular conducted a highly critical press campaign, frequently highlighting, with an eye to the vote, all the ‘damaging effects’ of European decisions.¹⁶ This approach was in line with that adopted by the union for a number of years. It increased its criticism of a European integration that would cause the state to crumble, threaten workers’ rights and ultimately prevent the development of socialism. FO therefore rejected the European ideal, refusing to accept everything in its name and saying that continuity must be respected. This reorientation of its views began in the early 1990s when Marc Blondel became Secretary General of the organisation, ahead of the heir apparent promoted by his predecessor, and deliberately adopted a more attacking tone (Pernot 2001b: 161). He clearly demonstrated this in an editorial published at the time of the 1999 European elections.¹⁷

For several years we have been saying in *Force Ouvrière* that European integration demands a genuine debate on: Why Europe? On what bases? Under what terms? What are the purposes? ... They are now trying to say to us that this debate is no longer relevant, that decisions have been made (including on the euro) and that the important issue is: how should European integration continue in the future? In a way this once again avoids any debate on the fundamental issue.

The European Employment Pact, which was particularly called into question, became the focus of FO’s criticisms because its negotiation did not allow for a debate on the ‘economic and monetary bases of European integration’, which would result in the ‘continued submission of social and employment issues to the diktats imposed by financial market participants’. Subsequently, the defence of public services and, more specifically, the Bolkenstein

15. Dossier ‘Pour la ratification des accords de Maastricht’, *Syndicalisme Hebdo*, 23 July 1992, pp. 7–10.

16. For example, we can refer to an article published in *FO Hebdomadaire* on 16 February 2005: ‘Le social à la sauce bruxelloise : un nouvel « agenda » pour favoriser la concurrence sans, paraît-il, sacrifier le droits des salariés’, p. 19. The following week, an article discussed the working week in the Netherlands, which could be up to 55 hours: ‘Pour être plus en harmonie avec les directives de Bruxelles’. See also the dossier ‘L’Europe en question’, published in *FOH*, No 2705, 6 April 2005, which published the press release of the confederal committee of 30–31 March 2005.

17. ‘L’Europe. Quelle Europe?’, *FO Hebdomadaire*, 16 May 1999.

Directive – against which it gave many warnings – caught its attention, with FO acting together with the Belgian unions to prevent its adoption, in anticipation of the position of the ETUC and other, more timorous French unions. According to FO, this threat to public services, this possibility of ‘widespread social dumping’, was an example of Market Europe at work, which was at the heart of its criticisms.¹⁸ This distrust of Europe was expressed even with regard to EU enlargement. Without rejecting the principle of opening up the Union, which marked the victory of democracies over the former communist regimes, FO was the only organisation in France to openly express its fears about the risks of the social and wage dumping that would be suffered by workers in western Europe as a result of the ‘inadequate social standardisation’ required of new entrants.¹⁹

The CFDT took the opposite position as it had participated in the preparation of the text and in the debates on the future of Europe, and published a document entitled ‘L’Europe que nous voulons’ (‘The Europe that we want’). One of its former international sector officials, Roger Briesch, was even a member of the Convention responsible for drafting the Treaty within the EESC (Dague 2011:67-68). Having come out in favour of the Treaty very early on, its investment in the information campaign intensified as the debates gathered momentum in France, with the CFDT taking care to highlight the ETUC position, getting its General Secretary, John Monks, to speak during its meeting in support of the Treaty and using the following slogan: ‘avec la CES, la CFDT soutient les avancées sociales du traité’ (‘together with the ETUC, the CFDT supports the social advances of the Treaty’).²⁰

Between FO and the CFDT, both of which wanted to build a social Europe but had opposing views of the TCE in this respect, the hesitations of the CGT in themselves illustrated the ambivalences of the French left towards Europe and the borderline between what might appear to be an advance and what seemed to be an obstacle to the implementation of social rights. When the Treaty was assessed by the ETUC Executive Committee in October 2004, the CGT decided to abstain, officially to allow its members time to inform themselves before adopting their positions. However, those positions diverged even at the top of the CGT. Joël Decaillon co-signed an opinion in *Le Monde* stressing the importance of signing up to the Union’s Charter of Fundamental Rights (Decaillon and Rautureau 2004). However, the CGT’s leaders as a whole did not want to give any voting instructions, aware that many activists, having absorbed the debates conducted in parallel in the parties of the left, favoured an attitude of firm opposition, and also so that it would not be sidelined once again in the ETUC, in which the vast majority of members had adopted the draft Treaty.

As a result, the report published by the executive committee was very careful. It asserted that the Treaty confirmed the liberalism for which the CGT was striving and ‘that there are some strong elements that are extremely negative’, but also ‘elements that the trade union movement will be able to adopt’. Disowning their leadership, the members of the national confederal committee adopted a ‘contribution of the CGT to the public debate on the European challenges and particularly the draft Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe’, which called for mass rejection in the referendum by arguing that Europe should

18. See, in particular, the press release published by FO on 4 June 2004, *Europe : danger de libéralisation pour l’ensemble des services*.

19. *Rapport d’activité*, 20th FO confederal congress, 2–6 February 2004, pp. 894–898.

20. Article by Séverin Prené (2005). The CFDT’s national bureau had adopted its position in September 2004.

be ‘a powerful means of regulation and reorientation of globalisation’.²¹ The leadership, which in essence agreed with this opposition, only managed to get itself out of this tangle by calling for Europe to ‘change course’.

4. The French trade unions and the ETUC

4.1. The ETUC’s early years

Due to its membership of the European Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ECFTU), FO was the only French trade union present at the creation of the ETUC in February 1973. It was quickly joined by the CFDT, although it did not approve this membership as it opposed any enlargement beyond the founding members affiliated to the ICFTU, therefore rejecting both members of the WCL – the former international confederation of Christian trade unions, which had for some time wanted to participate in the creation of the European confederation – and communist unions. The secular FO in fact viewed the Christian origins of the former with some suspicion, denying them any legitimacy within the workers’ movement and reproaching them for their closeness to the latter (Pernot 2001a: 453–454).²² It also feared that the WCL organisations would create, in the words of André Bergeron at the time, ‘real fractions’ that might be joined by Christian activists who were members of unified organisations such as the DGB (German Trade Union Confederation) or CISL (Italian Trade Union Confederation).²³

FO defended the idea that a European organisation was necessary to give the workers’ movement the means to exist vis-à-vis the Community institutions, but advocated a limited organisation integrated within international ‘free’ trade unionism and rejecting regional autonomy. Its Secretary General, André Bergeron, even proposed, during the ICFTU congress in July 1972 in London, that a predefined and institutional role for the international organisation should be recognised within the European organisation, as a way of protecting against any possibility of enlargement.²⁴ Likewise, he refused to allow the European confederation to take over ‘general policy’, out of fear of creating a ‘state within a state’, which would encroach upon the action of the international confederation from which it was born, even saying that he regarded ‘the European organisation as a subdivision of the ICFTU’. Although FO had to resign itself to allowing the WCL organisations and then the CGIL to enter the ETUC, it never changed its position, even after the fact when the decisions had already been made. FO therefore made itself the ‘guardian’ of the spirit of the

21. The executive committee report written by Francine Blanche on the European challenges and the text adopted by the national confederal committee were published in *Le Peuple*, No. 1607, 16 February 2005. The latter received 81 votes for, 18 against and 17 abstentions.

22. In France, the CFDT had signed a unity of action agreement with the CGT in 1966 and then again in 1970, and these two organisations had carried out common industrial action. At international level, the WCL had taken part in the Dubrovnik meeting in February 1972, together with the WFTU and non-aligned organisations, with the aim of preparing for the ILO conference independently of the ICFTU.

23. Argument made both before FO activists and the ETUC Executive Committee, as shown by the report on the 12th FO confederal congress, 11–14 June 1974, introductory statement of A. Bergeron, ‘Le syndicalisme doit être libre et indépendant’, pp. 20–21. See also the ETUC document, *Minutes of the Executive Committee*, 4 May 1973 and 24–25 January 1974, IISH No. 547 and No. 553.

24. ECFTU document (French version), *Extraits de discours concernant l’organisation syndicale européenne*, 10th world congress of the ICFTU, London, 10–14 July 1972, IISH No. 1032.

European organisation, as shown by the opinion published by the FO Secretary General during preparations for the Munich congress, in which he beseeched the ETUC ‘not to lose its soul’. Bergeron felt that the ETUC, by agreeing to open up to the French CGT through favouring ‘unity of numbers’ to the detriment of unity ‘of hearts and minds’, could ‘neutralise and break up the international free trade union movement’.²⁵

For the CFDT, the ETUC was primarily an instrument of renewal of global trade unionism. As a member of the WCL, it was able to join the European confederation only a year after its creation, in March 1974. However, it had done much towards the organisation’s creation. At a time when it was trying to extract itself from the Christian sphere and expand its relations beyond the WCL, Europe offered the possibility of promoting a whole new international trade unionism, more powerful and independent in comparison with the main trade union confederations.²⁶ As a result, in 1969 its international sector official, René Salanne, took part in the informal meetings of the ‘Perraudin’ group, together with Belgian, Italian and German trade union officials and also officials from Brussels, to discuss rapprochement between the ECFTU and the European Organisation of the WCL (EO-WCL). The CFDT very closely followed the stages of its implementation, acting within the WCL to prevent a European regional grouping from remaining within that organisation. It backed up its action within the EO-WCL with strong statements: for example, in May 1972 its national committee, the ‘parliamentary’ organ of the union, launched an appeal ‘for a unitary European trade union structure’.²⁷ Although the text referred to the possible agreement between members of the ICFTU and the WCL, it did not hesitate to extend this grouping ‘to all representative organisations in the democratic countries of Europe that freely agree to contribute independently and responsibly to the formation of a new European trade union force’, a position that the confederation maintained until the 1990s, including in favour of the CGT. It was therefore hugely disappointed when, following debates within the ICFTU, it was decided to refuse a merger with the EO-WCL and to delay the entry of its organisations. In the report on the ETUC founding congress in the trade union press, René Salanne denounced the ‘old divisions’ that were preventing the formation of a force ‘capable of defending workers at the various levels at which fundamental decisions are increasingly being taken’.²⁸ The CFDT’s leaders were not, however, discouraged and entrusted René Salanne with the task of writing to his contacts within the trade unions, who he knew were in favour of opening up the ETUC, to discuss the conditions for individual affiliation, such as Bruno Storti, Secretary General of the ICFTU, and also Hargraves, who was responsible for international affairs within the TUC, and Urs Hauser, who was a member of the international department of the LO (Swedish Trade Union Confederation).²⁹

During the creation of the ETUC, the CGT, which favoured a continental alliance that also took in the Soviet sphere, remained on the sidelines. However, it could not deny the reality of this new entity, which brought together all the ICFTU organisations and was preparing to open up to the EO-WCL organisations. In its first official reaction to the birth of

25. Editorial by A. Bergeron (1979).

26. On this subject, see Roccati (2014: 316–329).

27. *Résolution du comité national*, CFDT, 25–27 May 1972, AC 8H1844.

28. ‘8 et 9 février à Bruxelles: création de la Confédération européenne des syndicats’, *Syndicalisme CFDT*, No. 1432, 14 February 1973.

29. Letters sent by R. Salanne on behalf of the CFDT on 9 January 1973. Strategy also mentioned in the international sector document annexed to *Nouvelles CFDT* No. 8/73, entitled ‘La Confédération européenne des syndicats’, AC 8H1827.

the ETUC, it therefore regarded the creation of the confederation as ‘positive’ and welcomed the prevailing ‘unitary’ spirit, while pointing out that the new structure was still a long way from being the unified movement that it said it wanted to become.³⁰ The CGT said that it was in favour of a grouping of trade unions within a permanent body in Europe, which should be open ‘to all trade unions in western Europe without distinction in terms of national or international affiliation’, thereby respecting the sovereignty and freedom of orientation of its members. The CGT was not therefore uninterested in the ETUC. While not risking an official application for membership – not being certain of the outcome – it indicated in a letter to the European leaders favourable to its affiliation that it was interested in the new confederation. It said that it ‘was keen to be affiliated to the ETUC’, but that this membership should occur under ‘normal conditions’; that is, according to the same rules observed by the EO-WCL organisations.³¹ The CGT particularly demanded, as an initial condition of its entry, that it should be guaranteed the possibility of remaining within the WFTU. It also wanted ‘the ETUC’s programme to be acceptable to all’. Its position therefore became clearer: it was not in favour of a strictly western organisation but, given the CGT’s position within the trade union movement and so that the ETUC could be a real instrument for defending workers, it could not sideline itself. However, affiliation could not be at any price, particularly that of abandoning the WFTU. Unlike the CGIL, it has therefore kept its main contacts in the WFTU and represents the latter’s principal values, with the defence of socialism and the USSR being at the top of the list (Régin 2006).

Faced with this position, the ETUC, at Germany’s instigation, took a very cautious approach. When the CGT requested an interview with President Vetter to discuss membership terms, it took several debates within the Executive Committee, and then within the Finance and General Management Committee, for a meeting with a CGT delegation to be agreed. It was stipulated, however, that this could not be about ‘negotiations prior’ to membership; most organisations refrained from giving an opinion on possible membership.³² Contacts were made between the CGT and the ETUC, without being publicised, before an official meeting between delegations one year later; this long delay demonstrated the multiple precautions taken by the committee given the objections raised within the ETUC to the CGT’s proposed entry.³³ In addition, the CGT had to give certain guarantees to the European organisation about its proposed attitude: it not only had to accept the ETUC’s articles of association and the broad lines of its action programme, and give assurances that it would not do anything if it profoundly disagreed with a decision adopted by a majority in the ETUC, but it also had to agree to prioritise the interests of workers in western Europe over those in eastern Europe, even when these were being defended by the WFTU.³⁴

30. *Déclaration de la CGT sur la CES*, 21 February 1973, IHS 59CFD37.

31. Letter from G. Séguy to V. Feather on 14 December 1973 and letter from G. Seguy to V. Feather and G. Debunne, 21 January 1974, IHS 59CFD37.

32. Letter from G. Séguy to H.-O. Vetter, 23 August 1974, IHS 59CFD37. Minutes of the ETUC Executive Committee, 6 February 1975, AC 8H1929. Letter from T. Rasshaert to G. Séguy, 10 February 1975, IHS 59CFD37. At that stage, only the CFDT had indicated its agreement and FO its refusal.

33. The IHS has kept handwritten notes on the meeting in November 1975 (59CFD37). The CGT also published a press release: *Le secrétariat européen de la CGT à Bruxelles*. According to the report of the US Mission to the European Community in Brussels, sent to the Secretary of State in Washington, dated November 1975 and signed Morris, the ETUC Secretariat had clearly sought to avoid this meeting so as not to cause a crisis within the DGB. US Department of State Archives, document No 1975ECBRU09923.

34. ETUC document submitted to the Executive Committee on 9–10 December 1976, *Compte-rendu de la réunion entre une délégation de la CGT et une délégation de la CES (Bruxelles, 5 novembre 1976)*, 9 November 1976, IHS 59CFD31.

During this procrastination, the CGT applied itself to showing that its concept of trade union action in Europe was not so far removed from that of the ETUC. It therefore published a press release following the ETUC congress in London in May 1976 to underline the similarity of their analyses of the job situation.³⁵ It also offered its services on several occasions when the ETUC organised action days; for example, during the joint demonstration for jobs in October 1975.³⁶ These initiatives were intended in particular to show that the ETUC could not do without the CGT's mobilising force if it wanted to be a real instrument of action. In April 1978, the CGT again wanted to seize the opportunity to show its strength, but it was not content with simply asking to join the European initiative. It wanted bilateral discussions to take place in order to reach agreement on the terms for its participation in the European action day. It also invited the Spanish CCOO, which was also in discussions on its membership and suffering from the same indecision, to ask for the same, arguing that 'if it ... seems that the CGT's participation could assist the action in France and consequently its success and the interests of workers in Europe, then it ... seems clear that the same argument can be objectively made for [Spain]'.³⁷ This type of approach could only put the ETUC in an awkward position, and unsurprisingly it refused to agree to this request. Shortly afterwards, in June 1980, the CGT's application for membership was officially rejected on the basis of the 'fundamental concepts of society and the role of trade unions within that society', arguing that its political practices and international affiliation did not fit with the fundamental criteria of the ETUC.³⁸

4.2. Contrasting investments of the CFDT and FO

From the start, the CFDT's leaders have wanted to push the ETUC to be a real instrument of action and not just a coordination agency. This is clearly apparent in the speech made by Edmond Maire in 1973: he warned that this organisation could not be 'a waiting room of the European Economic Community where trade unionists "chat" while waiting for meagre audiences', but rather 'an international organisation for action where the views of workers are discussed, where unifying and mobilising platforms of demands are prepared, and where considered and coordinated initiatives go beyond nationalisms and whiffs of the Cold War'.³⁹ This was also the direction of his speech at the London congress in 1976 when the resolution that he tabled was adopted as a recommendation to the Executive Committee that it clarify its action objectives.⁴⁰

Questions remained, however, about the CFDT's capacity for initiative within the European confederation. Unlike FO, its Secretary General was not Vice-President of the ETUC and none of its representatives were members of the Finance and General Management Committee, whose meetings preceded and prepared for the Executive Committee sessions. The CFDT could only rely on the presence of political secretaries from its ranks – deputies to Mathias Hinterscheid and then Emilio Gabaglio – such as François Staedelin (1976–1986)

35. *Communiqué de la CGT*, 12 May 1976, CGT IHS 144CFD2.

36. Letter from G. Séguay to Vetter, 8 October 1975, IHS 59CFD37.

37. Letter from G. Séguay to H.-O. Vetter, 31 January 1978, and letter to Seraphin Alliga (CCOO), 1 February 1978, IHS 59CFD31.

38. Letter from M. Hinterscheid to the CGT, 23 June 1980, cited by G. Debunne in his memoirs (2003: 67).

39. Speech by E. Maire on the occasion of the presentation of the general report to the 36th confederal congress of the CFDT and general resolution, *Syndicalisme Hebdo*, No 1448, 7 June 1973, pp. 3 and 20.

40. 'Le congrès de la CES', *Syndicalisme ...*, art. cit.

and then Jean Lapeyre (1986–2003), whose appointment to the Secretariat was the result of a deliberate strategy on the part of the confederation. Although the latter did not act as representatives of the organisation, they were, in addition to being a possible relay, a source of information and an important link for understanding ‘European mysteries’. An Alsatian by origin and a former postal worker, Staedelin – at the time head of the PTT federation – was chosen for his knowledge of German, which enabled him to easily integrate within the ETUC Secretariat and facilitated relations with the DGB. Jean Lapeyre was the main person responsible for social dialogue at European level, which marked the commitment of the CFDT to the ETUC (Dague 2011:19–21 and 40–43).

For its part, FO has never sought to blend in with the European organisation. Preferring to adopt a ‘look-out’ role, it has been keen to ensure that the ETUC’s positions are in line with its own, contenting itself with occasional opposition when necessary. FO has therefore had little influence on the strategic choices of the European confederation. Its Secretary General has, however, since 1973 been a member of the Finance and General Management Committee, responsible for preparing for Executive Committee meetings, but FO has never supported this presence by developing privileged bilateral relations. In the late 1980s, FO tried to reinvigorate its European action by setting up a Europe sector within the confederal bureau and establishing a permanent delegation to Brussels. The aim was to better inform activists about, and raise their awareness of, the European challenges. It therefore made 1 May 1989 into a European Day and invited the ETUC to join its parade, copying its slogans calling for a social Europe.⁴¹ However, as its analysis of European integration has become increasingly critical, it has gradually distanced itself from the European confederation. Whereas previously FO called on the national organisations to get involved in the ETUC and abandon part of their sovereignty, it now calls for the ‘transfer of powers’ to the confederation with regard to Europe-wide negotiations specifically to occur in line with the subsidiarity principle. The ETUC should therefore negotiate only ‘on a limited basis and through a very precise mandate from the affiliated organisations’.⁴² At the ETUC congress in Luxembourg in 1991, the European organisation was attacked for its lack of action and its tendency to simply denounce the social deficit of European integration, without diverging from the agenda set by the Commission or national governments.⁴³ Marc Blondel was the instigator of this approach and he made the most virulent attacks against the European confederation, particularly when he left his post as Secretary General:

It should be noted that the ETUC is not behaving like a traditional trade union trying to ensure a balance of power at European level, but more like a pressure group that is lobbying the European Commissioners.⁴⁴

The FO representative was therefore repeating criticisms already made during the Prague congress, which he had in fact refused to attend as Secretary General. Since his departure

41. *Compte rendu des travaux du 17e congrès confédéral FO*, 27–30 April 1992, ‘Rapport d’activité’, p. 154.

42. ‘Europe. Les 40 organisations syndicales de la CES en congrès’, *FO Hebdomadaire*, 22 May 1991.

43. *FO Circular No 74/91*, 22 May 1991, ‘Congrès de la CES. Luxembourg mai 1991. Discours de Marc Blondel, secrétaire général de Force Ouvrière’.

44. *Compte rendu des travaux du XXe congrès confédéral FO*, 2–6 February 2004 at Villepinte, opening speech by the Secretary General: ‘L’indépendance: une force pour l’avenir des salariés’ and general resolution, pp. 29 and 645. This denunciation of ‘European lobbying’ had emerged the previous year at the ETUC congress in Prague, which FO had attended in order to denounce the ETUC’s financial dependence on the European institutions.

from the confederation, FO has continued to make the same criticisms, particularly at the Seville congress, at which it submitted more amendments than most other organisations.⁴⁵ FO reproaches the ETUC for going along with a liberal construction of Europe and adapting its logic in return for meagre social guarantees without any real value. This is strong criticism and, indeed, it is the only organisation that openly says this, even within the ETUC. Furthermore, FO has proved hostile to any enlargement, expressing doubts about the possibilities of extension to the East, always fearing encroachment on the terrain of the ICFTU, maintaining its opposition to the entry of the CGT – a position that it will defend to the very end – and refusing to vote on its affiliation in 1999, as for any other communist organisation. Since the 1980s, only the affiliation applications of the Spanish UGT and Portuguese UGT-P, which had previously joined the ICFTU, have received its backing. Since its creation, FO has constantly highlighted the origins of the ETUC, which came out of ‘free’ trade unionism, and has always taken care to respect the action of the ICFTU, as if the European organisation were nothing more than a delegation of power from the international confederation. In fact, during the creation of the ITUC, FO demanded that the ETUC become part of the international organisation, highlighting once again its fundamental opposition to continental independence.

The CFDT’s position is different: it can rely in particular on the support of the Belgians and Italians to make the ETUC into an effective instrument of action, but the significance of the link between its main members and the ICFTU forms the main obstacle to its ambitions with regard to the European confederation. Keen to make the ETUC into a key player in the restructuring of international trade unionism, the CFDT wants it to take its rightful place in meeting global challenges and not to hesitate in acting beyond the Community sphere, just like an international confederation. With this in mind, the CFDT publicises its key positions: for example, the text that it adopted on the exercise of freedoms in the East, when it was boiling over with dissidence, and its propaganda materials (posters, brochures and so on) were used in the fight against apartheid in South Africa, which was an action to which the ICFTU and the WCL were particularly committed.

Jacques Chérèque, who succeeded René Salanne, encouraged the ETUC Secretariat to react to the situation in Argentina and expressly called for an ETUC statement condemning the dictatorship of General Videla: in this way the ETUC could support the exiles, many of whom were in Europe, without encroaching on the prerogatives of the international organisations.⁴⁶ The issue was debated during the Executive Committee session on 27–28 September 1979, but the CFDT could not convince its partners. The latter – mainly also members of the ICFTU – did not consider such action to be necessary, unlike the CFDT, which broke with the international arm in 1979. This departure further reinforced its European ambition, which it made the top priority of its international policy.

Its change of view about Europe was also evident in how it envisaged the format of the ETUC. In the name of social Europe, the CFDT called for the contractual dimension to be favoured by developing its supranationality, which meant giving more power to the Secretariat. At the 1991 congress, it supported the changes to the ETUC structures, to which it had contributed through its exchanges with the ETUC Secretariat and its participation in the ad

45. See also ‘Xe congrès de la CES. Lobbying ou syndicalisme, il faut choisir’, *FO Hebdomadaire*, No. 2622, 25 June 2003, p. 15. On the Seville congress, see Dufresne and Gobin (2007).

46. Letters from A. Soulat (Confederal Secretary of the CFDT) to M. Hinterscheid, 9 March 1977 and 29 May 1978; letter from J. Chérèque to M. Hinterscheid, 18 September 1979, IISH No. 1218.

hoc working group.⁴⁷ It expressed itself satisfied with the action taken by the duo of Lapeyre and Gabaglio, and particularly with the efforts made by the latter to impose a regulation on European collective bargaining, to be conducted by the ETUC Secretariat, setting out the procedures for preparing and deciding on negotiating mandates. It wanted to go further and set an example. In 1999 it adopted a resolution in which it undertook to copy the texts adopted by the ETUC because ‘only a broader transfer of national trade union responsibilities to the ETUC will allow adequate regulations and decisions to be adopted at confederal, regional and sectoral level’, thus accepting the priority of supranationality over such decisions.⁴⁸

4.3. The significant entry of the CGT

The entry of the CGT into the ETUC opened a whole new chapter. This integration, which officially occurred in 1999, had in fact been on the cards for around 10 years. The fall of the Berlin Wall and the break-up of the USSR shook the CGT to its very core and led it to distance itself from the Communist Party and adapt its action policy (Mouriaux 2005: 34). Even Henri Krasucki, despite having advocated in the early 1980s that the CGT should re-join the camp of the East, became aware of the CGT’s isolation in Europe. He therefore launched a new call for membership of the ETUC, without, however, changing his views.⁴⁹ In a long letter, he tirelessly repeated the arguments of the CGT, which was ‘the strongest, most influential, most combative’ organisation that Europe could not ignore when the social state of the Community was of such concern and the Social Charter was useless. If the ETUC, which had been ineffective up to that point, wanted to be able to back up its investment in the negotiations with demonstrations of force, against employers who were not accepting any advance for workers, the support of the CGT was essential. Couched in these terms, however, the CGT’s request received little backing.

Louis Viannet, who succeeded Krasucki in 1992, was the one who gave the necessary impetus to the CGT’s campaign for membership of the ETUC, starting with re-establishing contact with the CGIL and FGTB (Belgian General Federation of Labour), while pursuing relations with the Spanish and Portuguese trade unions. He expressed a wish for the CGT to contribute to the European trade union movement so that, as he saw it, its course of action could be altered and its core social objectives could be established (Viannet 2006). As number two in the CGT, in charge of the cooperation sector, he had already managed to detach the Europe sector and entrust it to Joël Decaillon, a man who was well-informed on European issues, having previously taken part in the international rail workers’ seminars for over 10 years, a member of the European Joint Committee on Railways, and the confederation’s representative to the European Economic and Social Committee in Brussels. He therefore became the focus of the CGT’s European contacts. Their first initiative was to organise ‘in solidarity’ a national action day on the same date that the ETUC decided to mobilise workers – 18 October 1989 – even going so far as to parade in Brussels around the European event.⁵⁰

47. Letter from R. Briesch, international sector official, to M. Hinterscheid on the future of the ETUC, 9 April 1990, AC 50DIE3.

48. International resolution: ‘Le syndicalisme face au défi de la mondialisation’, 44th confederal congress of the CFDT, *Syndicalisme Hebdo*, No. 2709, 3 September 1998, p. 81.

49. Letter from H. Krasucki to E. Breit and M. Hinterscheid, 7 May 1991, IHS 59CFD31.

50. See, on this subject, Decaillon (1989). Interview with Joël Decaillon, 9 February 2015, in Paris.

These two men had the good fortune to find within the ETUC another duo who were keen for the CGT to join the European confederation: Emilio Gabaglio and Peter Seideneck. The ETUC General Secretary had already offered a sympathetic ear to Krasucki's approach, meeting with a CGT representative for Europe during a CGIL congress. The initial contacts were made discretely, but the situation came to light when Peter Seideneck took part in the CGT congress in 1995. In the meantime, the Europe sector carried out multiple initiatives to make activists aware of European issues and pursued exchanges with ETUC member organisations.

Further significant steps were taken when, a few months later, a circular from the Europe sector called on all the CGT's organisations to participate in the action day organised by the ETUC for 29 March 1996, and when the confederation joined the European action for Vilvorde, which Renault wanted to close. The CGT joined the action, but it was the appearance of its leaders at the front of the Brussels demonstration, beside the leaders of the ETUC, the CFDT and FO, that was particularly telling.⁵¹ At that stage, the CGT had already broken with the WFTU, thus removing one of the obstacles to its membership of the ETUC. This break had been supported by a very large majority in the CGT, due to significant efforts made by Louis Viannet and Joël Decaillon, the latter having joined the executive committee in 1992. The organisation had also sufficiently adapted its European views so that they were closer to those of the ETUC: in 1995 it announced, by rewording its membership application, its desire to take part in the construction of a trade union 'counter-power' and thereby demonstrated its desire to participate in the construction of a different Europe, 'which is for the workers, for their needs and their common interests'.⁵² It declared this again in a statement by its executive committee on 3 May 1996, which it circulated in the form of a brochure and which called for further debate on the future of European integration.⁵³ In this statement, it described in particular an integrated Europe, built 'on structures of solidarity and cooperation', which would ensure 'respect for and improvement of the fundamental social rights of employees'. Over the course of 20 years, the CGT therefore changed its view and seemed to agree with the other organisations on the opportunity that Europe could represent. However, the CGT's membership of the ETUC became reality only when the CFDT finally agreed in 1998. FO remained firmly opposed but lacked the means to prevent it.

Although it was the CGT that joined the European confederation, this also resulted in the latter's action taking on a new tone. Very quickly, the CGT encouraged, within the ETUC, the organisation of Euro-demonstrations to get the confederation working much more on the ground than through 'a top-level European trade unionism'. As a result, one of the first initiatives of the CGT's leaders, once in the ETUC, was to make contact with the Portuguese trade unions to encourage the organisation of demonstrations during the European Council summit in Lisbon in March 2000, and thus instigate a broad mobilisation effort with a view to the Nice summit under the French Presidency.⁵⁴ The CGT therefore made use of the good integration of its leader since 1999, Bernard Thibault, who had figured in the 1995 social

51. On the action for Vilvorde, see Degryse and Tilly (2013: 151–152). Episode of the demonstration on 16 March 1997 recounted by L. de Comarmond (2013: 126–127).

52. Letter from L. Viannet to E. Gabaglio, 14 March 1995, IHS 59CFD31. See also *Compte rendu in extenso des débats du 45e congrès confédéral de la CGT*, 3–8 December 1995, Montreuil, p. 93.

53. Statement by the executive committee of the CGT, 3 May 1996, L'Europe et la France sont à un tournant. Agissons et luttons pour de nouvelles solidarités, IHS 24CFD10.

54. Interview with J. Decaillon, 9 February 2015, in Paris.

movement. He offered a view that was primarily ‘French’, aware that the capacity to make themselves heard within an extended organisation would come primarily from the absence of disagreements at national level. (His European investment would later result in his election to the ETUC Executive Committee in 2007.) The CGT also agreed with the line taken by the new British General Secretary, John Monks. Joël Decaillon therefore naturally found his place within the Secretariat when he succeeded Jean Lapeyre as the ‘French’ member from 2003, a sign of the rapid integration of an organisation long banned in Europe and of the value given to its contribution.

The CGT is therefore at ease in an ETUC that has become more combative; for example, denouncing ‘casino capitalism’. Conversely, the CFDT, having robustly defended European social dialogue, has found itself isolated. It still defends the idea of Europe as a necessary space, but its views have become less audible in an ETUC that no longer wants Europe to be built at any price. Isolated, its only real choice has been to get together with the CGT in order to try to offer a French voice on the European scene. It is this capacity to work together – developed during preparations for the most recent ETUC congresses, particularly in Seville and then Athens, when the French organisations tabled joint amendments – on which the future place of the French organisations in the European confederation will depend.⁵⁵

5. Conclusion

Whereas, at the start of the 2000s, the European idea seemed to be stronger than ever, the referendum on the European Constitution dented this optimism, revealing significant disagreements between the trade unions, even if none of them called into question the principle of European integration. In this respect, there has been convergence between the French organisations. It should be said that the system of social regulation in France, given the limited place afforded to the trade unions, does not form an obstacle to Europeanisation: the trade unions do not have to fear the extension of debates to the supranational level because their power does not in any way enable them to assert themselves at the national level (Pernot 2010: 318–320). As a result, no organisation opposes the construction of a social Europe, but behind the slogan the strategies to achieve this differ greatly, just like the challenges posed. These differences therefore make it difficult to interpret the attitude of French trade unionism towards Europe.

In 40 years, the main French organisations have changed a great deal and their positions have reversed. In 1973 FO seemed to be the most ‘pro-European’ organisation, but in a Europe conceived as an anti-communist bastion and with an ETUC representing ‘free’ forces. From the moment that the ETUC began to expand, firstly by opening up to Christian organisations and then eventually to communist organisations, FO has kept distancing itself. It is now the confederation that is most critical of both the *acquis communautaire* and the ETUC, even though such a departure could never have been imagined. The CGT, the organisation that was initially most critical of the very idea of Europe, following in the footsteps of a communist movement that was highly mistrustful of a process coming from the West, has for its part reversed course to become, in the past decade, an organisation to be reckoned with in Brussels. As for the CFDT, it has gradually made European integration into its action

55. On the French participation in the Seville and Athens congresses, see, respectively, Dufresne and Gobin (2007) and Rehfeld (2011).

horizon. However, what was valid when the trade union structure supported European integration has become more difficult to sustain when the ETUC has adopted a more critical tone towards this. That is why its European commitment is now less publicised.

Beyond these divergences, has Europe played a role in the aspiration for unity of the French trade unions? In the name of European interests, internal tensions have been held in check, as shown by the CFDT's constant support for the CGT's membership of the ETUC up to 1980. Many activists have noticed the improved relations since it has become commonplace to attend branch meetings and the working habits to which this has lent itself. European meetings have, however, formed the main occasion to express disagreements between organisations, with the view of Europe reflecting their political differences. However, a change has perhaps occurred since the 2000s. This change seems to be linked, firstly, to the path of these organisations: they feel more strongly the need to have a European instrument capable of organising transnational action, by promoting supranational negotiation when necessary.⁵⁶ Secondly, the personalities of the trade union leaders have certainly played a part. Awareness of the need for a French voice has developed across the board. Only the future, and the development of Europe itself, will tell whether this becomes an underlying logic or whether, with the change in leaders, the good personal understanding will belong to the past.

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⁵⁶ As demonstrated by the words of J. Decaillon, reported by L. de Comarmond (1999).

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Chapter 3

Italian trade unionism and the ETUC: in favour of a European social actor

Andrea Ciampani

1. Italian unions and European integration

The history of relations between the Italian and the European trade union movement is connected to the foundation of the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC), which cannot be understood without considering the need for participation and union representation that since 1950 has developed within the process of European integration. The asymmetries and dynamics of this history thus seem to be paradigmatic with regard to reconstruction of the evolution of the ETUC, given the nature of European trade unionism. In fact, if within the Italian labour movement we can find positions initially different from those of the major European democratic trade union confederations, a (sometimes exhausting) process developed later that aimed to favour the inclusion and expansion of ETUC membership. The Italian trade union experience assumed a position of special importance in the European scenario. Along with the German trade unions they endorsed the Schuman Plan and belonged to the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC); while, like the British unions, they belonged to the European Regional Organisation of the International Confederation of Free Trade Union (ICFTU).¹ It was in

1. The Italian leaders of the CISL (founded in 1950) had participated in the founding of the ICFTU and its regional body, to which the UIL became affiliated immediately (1951). The social communist unionism of the CGIL, adhering to the World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU), contrasted sharply with 'free' trade unionism; only in 1992 did the CGIL request and obtain affiliation with the ICFTU. In Italy, therefore, no union belonged to the International Confederation of Christian Trade Unions (ICCW/WLC), and most Catholic workers belonged to the CISL. The post-fascist confederation CISNAL remained outside international trade union confederations, as did the UGL union, which inherited this organisation when it was founded in 1996.

those international trade union contexts that the Italian trade unions CISL and UIL made a significant contribution to the German, French and Benelux unions, among the Six Countries that were members of the common market (ECM), while the British and Nordic trade unions worked under the aegis of the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) (Ciampani and Gabaglio 2010).

The role of Italian trade unions in the life of the ETUC was thus rooted in the attitude of these unions when they were called upon to take a position on the process of integration and its social and political implications at the national and international levels. Only in this perspective can we fully understand CISL and UIL's objectives when they promoted the birth of the ETUC in 1973 and CGIL's request to become affiliated in 1974. After that, Italian unionism became one of the largest bodies of national employee representation at European level.

Each of the major Italian confederations tried to promote convergence on common positions in order to play a meaningful role in the evolution of the ETUC. For a long time, CISL and UIL, the two unions that had the most experience in Community life, were a driving force with regard to the central and eastern European unions that joined the European democratic trade union movement in a transitional process from the 1980s onwards. This process was also influenced by the development of national syndicalism. However, there is no doubt that the European union experience made it possible to support the proposals of democratic trade unionism that had taken root thanks to workers' associations that were independent from political parties and the state, centred on contract negotiations and social regulation in order to participate in the implementation of labour market reforms (Ranieri 2007). From a historical perspective, moreover, the complex conjunction of interests and strategies of union actors at the European level that aimed at tipping the scales in favour of a more social Europe originated when unions chose to participate in the international bodies created in the post-war period (Carew 1996).

In Italy, it was Giulio Pastore, leader of the CISL, who on 18 April 1950 took the floor at the Third Conference of the Trade Union Advisory Committee of the European Recovery Programme to clarify the role of European trade unionism in relation to the problems of the labour force arising from the integration of international markets. He underscored that it was 'necessary to face the general problem of trade liberalisation, which is the first step towards creating a single European market'. Supported by Mario Romani, the principal scholar of industrial relations in Italy, Pastore noted that the coordination of investments in Europe could not be left 'to the exclusive jurisdiction of governments or, even worse, to the initiative of interested industrial groups', because if this occurred, all the difficulties that would ensue would weigh exclusively on workers. This meant that in relation to all labour-related issues, democratic western European trade unions should be allowed

to participate in a direct, albeit advisory capacity in all organisations and international negotiations that deal with this issue, eventually entering also into direct agreements with one another, both bilateral and multilateral in nature, on all issues ... that, technically, are their responsibility, with the aim of contributing their solidarity to these negotiations.²

2. See 'Il problema europeo della manodopera', in *Bollettino d'informazioni sindacali*, III, 1950, 6.

By adopting these positions, the CISL did not hesitate to take an openly pro-European stance and developed an approach to the process of European integration in a trade union perspective.³

While CISL and UIL were playing an important role in the European integration process and pushing the Italian government in this direction with their criticisms (Ciampani 2000; Tosi 2008; Craveri and Varsori 2009), the Communist current of the CGIL trade union opposed all aspects of European integration, in accordance with the slogans of the WFTU. The limits of the CGIL approach in the Italian trade union debate were fully revealed in 1956; during 1957 the CGIL and its socialist current, in particular, redrew their European approach for the first time (Ciampani 2010). In the early 1960s, the pressure of national and international political changes contributed to giving a new role to the minority socialist components within the CGIL and they urged the Italian Communist Party (PCI) to assess the political consequences of the recognition of European integration as a 'fact of life'. In the second half of the 1960s, the PCI began to ask the Italian government to implement its policies in the context of European institutions – the same institutions they had hitherto condemned, in accordance with Soviet policies. Meanwhile, CGIL was ready to draft an international policy (which until then was lacking due to its ties with the PCI and the WFTU) (Maggiorani 1998; Del Biondo 2010). In this context, the first talks – in 1963 – between socialist Fernando Santi for the CGIL and European Commissioner Levi Sandri paved the way for the CGIL's decision to open an office in Brussels.⁴

At the same time, CISL and UIL recognised clearly the instrumental nature of CGIL's policy shift with regard to European institutions: the stance taken by the democratic unions concerning the Communist unionism present in western countries and affiliated to the WFTU was to reject any form of agreements or arrangements, even if they were limited to the European level. The goal was to pose as a pre-condition for any sort of relations the explicit approval of the pan-European project and to facilitate the detachment of a significant part of Italian trade unionism from the international organisation linked to Moscow. Thus, while pressure was being applied to reunify the many Italian socialists spread across the various national political parties, the Vice President and European Commissioner for Social Affairs, Social Democrat Lionello Levi Sandri (Mechi and Varsori 2008), did not attend the CGIL Congress in March 1965. On the contrary, after the signing of the Treaty that merged the executive branches of the Community, the following April he brought the greetings of the Community bodies to the CISL Congress (CISL 1965: 50–51). While the European Trade Union Secretariat (ETUS) was being developed, CISL leader Bruno Storti was nominated by the German and Belgian trade unions as the Community countries' candidate for the ICFTU presidency. In July 1965, for the first time an Italian Catholic union leader was elected as the head of a democratic international trade union organisation (Ciampani 2000; Friso 2001).

This stalemate prompted CGIL to denounce its exclusion from the Community institutions as 'discrimination', despite the fact that until then it had claimed its radical choice was a struggle 'against monopolies' (a term they had used previously to stigmatise European

3. See CISL document 'Prospettive del sindacalismo nelle mozioni della CISL', 1950 (Ciampani 1991: 167–175).

4. See the newspaper *Le Drapeau Rouge*, 29 March 1963, conserved in ASN CISL, Carte Balboni, 6 CESL, Rapport CGIL-CGT. In the autumn, Ilario Tabarri was introduced to the Information and Documentation Centre of the Community as a trade unionist and journalist of *L'Unità*, the newspaper of the Communist Party; A. C. Rocchi, Deputy Secretary of the CISL, 29 November 1963, therein. On Tabarri's work between 1963 and 1966, see Del Biondo (2010: 140–164).

integration). The first suggestions of disaffiliation from the WFTU, which began to appear within CGIL on the eve of the Warsaw Congress of the international Communist trade union, were however set aside in favour of 'orthodox' proposals to establish regional structures in western Europe with 'broad autonomy' with respect to the Soviet Union.⁵ Thus, in December 1965, in compliance with the resolutions of the Sixth Congress of the WFTU (which imposed ties with the French CGT) (Del Biondo 2010: 82), the CGIL enunciated the change of policy: 'The European dimension, in short, is the contemporary and modern dimension, and is the necessary path of the CGIL in the Sixties' (Scheda 1965). Following the request made by the two western unions with a communist majority to join the Economic and Social Committee, in May 1966 the European Commissioner for Social Affairs gave CGIL a formal hearing for the first time.⁶ The meeting encouraged the foundation of the Comité Permanent de liaison et d'initiative syndicale CGIL – CGT (Del Biondo 2007; Ciampani 2010), which opened a secretariat office in Brussels only in May 1967.⁷

In this context, it had become urgent for the unions already present at the Community level – among them CISL and UIL – to establish a European trade union body that could play an active transnational role in the face of the socio-economic policies being promoted by the European Commission.⁸ In the second half of 1968, the Commission itself – and in particular Levi Sandri, who had been confirmed Vice President – exerted further pressure (supported by De Gaulle) to obtain participation in Community affairs on the part of the western communist trade unions, which provoked a reaction from the democratic trade unions. Théo Rasschaert, ETUS General Secretary, then remarked to Levi Sandri that international relations between trade union organisations were not a matter for the Commission and that besides, the Commission would obtain the support of the free trade unions only on the basis of the concrete measures it implemented.⁹

In July 1969, as is well known, the free trade unions took note of the resolution of the Christian Trade Unions in Europe (with which they had made a public declaration at Community level already in 1967)¹⁰ to negotiate not only a common programme with the EFTUC, but also the hypothesis of a 'collaboration organisée et structurée'.¹¹ To proceed in this direction, contacts with Cool and Kulakowski ensued at the top level of the OE-CMT: it was the start of the process that would lead to the birth of the ETUC. Faced with the prospect of the 'process of unification of the free trade unions of the Six Countries', Storti opened up, so to speak, to collaboration with the CGIL-CGT Committee, on two conditions: its independence from the WFTU and the 'creation of an organic structure of the two trade union centres at European level'.¹² This raised problems that seemed insurmountable. Nevertheless, the need for a solemn statement about the nature of their

5. So declared in 1965 Fabrizia Baduel Glorioso, the new head of the International Office of the CISL; ASN CISL, Carte Balboni, 6, CESL, Rapporti CGIL–CGT.

6. See the letter from OE-CISC General Secretary Jan Kulakowski, to Robert Majolin on 27 May 1966 and the response of European Commission President Walter Hallstein to Harm G. Buiter, General Secretary of the ETUS–ICFTU on 17 June 1966; IISH, ETUC 1267.

7. See the press release of Livio Mascarello and Mario Dido in IISH, ETUC 1267.

8. On relations with the Commission, see IISH ETUC, 1549–1551.

9. See Rasschaert's reports of the meetings with Levi Sandri and his letter of 31 October to L. Rosenberg, A. Bergeron, B. Storti, A. Kloos, I. Viglianesi, G. Debunne, M. Hintersheid and O. Brenner in IISH, ETUC 1266.

10. See 'I sindacati e l'Europa, dichiarazioni dei dirigenti sindacali (CISL-CISC) in occasione del decimo anniversario dei Trattati di Roma', Quaderni europei di documentazione sindacale e operaia, a cura del Servizio stampa e informazione delle Comunità europee, 1967.

11. See the agenda of the meeting of the EFTUC Executive Committee of 5 July in IISH, ETUC, 1268.

12. Thus already Storti in *Conquiste del Lavoro*, 4–11 November 1968, 4.

response to European integration as a precondition appeared less urgent. CISL and UIL seemed to take their time, as did CGIL, before evaluating the consequences of trade union unity, which for different reasons many in Italy were betting in favour of; the overall framework of the European policies of the Italian trade unions, however, had already undergone a radical change.

2. National unions for the ETUC or inside the ETUC?

The political and institutional crisis of the Italian governments in the late 1960s and early 1970s was intertwined with the social crisis that erupted for the trade unions in autumn 1969 (Ciampani 2013). The fundamental differences that were preventing the Italian trade unions from converging on a common position at the European level emerged after 28 February 1969, when Krasucki of the CGT and Lama of the CGIL had met with the leaders of the European Commission, Rey and Levi Sandri (Del Biondo 2007: 231). The significance of the event was highlighted by the almost simultaneous entry into the Parliamentary Assembly in Strasbourg of the first members of the Communist Party nominated by the Italian government (Ferrari and Maggiorani 2005).

The Congresses of the CGIL, CISL and UIL held in 1969 dealt with the issue of the unity of Italian trade unions. The idea that the process of Italian union unification could change CGIL's strategies began to circulate in European trade unions. Meanwhile, the unitary trade union response to the intensification of the conflict over contract renewals in October established the joint action of CGIL, CISL and UIL as a custom in Italy. Thus, even if at that time no agreement was found that would have permitted a joint declaration of the three confederations in relation to international and European policy, a unique initiative was organised, and though it had no direct reference to Community dynamics, it represented a public signal of the change under way in trade union action. In unofficial proceedings at a meeting of European trade unions with the EEC, 'les représentants des trois Confédérations Syndicales italiennes' organised a press conference on the 'Conflits sociaux en Italie, leurs caractères, leurs perspectives, leurs significations dans le contexte européen' at the Plaza Hotel in Brussels on 17 November 1969.¹³ The process of Italian trade union unity was thus expressed for the first time at the European level. Moreover, the differences between the Italian trade unions on the issue of European integration emerged again in the long-awaited triangular European Conference on labour issues (Degimbe 1999: 197–199; Savoini 2000: 41–43) held in Luxembourg in April 1970. After the first proposal for the unification of CGIL, CISL and UIL was made in October 1970, the three national secretariats met on 1–2 February 1971 to outline a road map for unification and to face the knotty problem of international trade unionism. Although certain significant objections to the process towards unity were publicly organised within the trade unions the following spring, a unitary conference was held on European trade unionism on 21–22 June 1971 to express the desire for increased 'union power' in the European Community, while contrasting 'nationalist and isolationist pressures'.

At that time however, further 'significant differences' surfaced, as was seen shortly thereafter at the meeting of the CGIL, CISL and UIL secretariats at Ostia on 25–26 June. In

13. See IISH, ETUC 1268.

any case, at the beginning of 1972, the push to form a single union in Italy came to an end. The process of unification got stranded and fell back on the formation of the CGIL-CISL-UIL Unitary Federation.¹⁴ Abandoning the planned unification allowed the Italian trade unions to participate more peacefully in the ETUC formation process.

As is well known, after the conclusion of the informal talks held in Frankfurt, Oslo and Geneva, the foundation of the European trade union made progress with the Luxembourg meeting of December 1972 (Dølvik 1999: 56–58).¹⁵ Faced with the problems inside ICFTU and the contrast between the unions of the EFTA and those of the ECM, the Christian trade unions accepted the procedure that was designed to establish the ETUC in two stages: the foundation of the ETUC in Brussels on 8–9 February 1973 (attended by 17 trade unions from ICFTU) and the extraordinary congress in Copenhagen, 23–25 May 1974 (with the membership of the seven European organisations of the WCL). Once again, CISL and UIL were among the founders of the ETUC: they confirmed their belief in free and democratic trade unionism and their commitment to supporting a European representation of workers, particularly in relation to the European institutions.¹⁶ In this process, the question of CGIL's membership was raised once again – it was still a member of the WFTU.

The CGIL Congress in July 1973 modified the Constitution with the intention of asking the WFTU to allow the transformation of CGIL's status as member to the status of 'associate', thereby avoiding any emphasis of the significance of this international choice (Loreto 2010; Del Rossi 2010). At the WFTU Congress in October 1973, in fact, there was widespread consensus on the meaning of a statutory amendment that sought to strengthen the proselytism of the communist trade union.¹⁷ The position that CGIL asserted proudly, in effect, was based on two fragile elements: the political approach and subordination to the choices of the other Italian confederations. First, CGIL's attitude was the result of a political compromise within the context of the internal dynamics of the PCI. The commitment of CGIL representatives who in the 1970s were preparing to take on responsibilities at European level was rooted in the dialectic of the Communist Party, unlike their predecessors, who due to their predominantly socialist orientation were thus a minority voice in CGIL's decision-making. In the early 1970s, the reformist wing of the PCI had developed the idea that 'Europe is not only a geopolitical and institutional model, but an alternative solution to the bipolar world'. In this perspective, Aldo Bonaccini (CGIL confederal secretary, responsible for international relations) proposed Giancarlo Meroni as secretary of the CGIL-CGT Standing Committee in Brussels. He had two objectives: 'to ensure that the CGIL as such was a partner in dialogue with the European institutions' and 'to advance dialogue with other European trade unions'.¹⁸

Secondly, the entry of the union led by Lama in the ETUC was inevitably mediated by CISL and UIL, which acted as guarantors of CGIL in Europe. At the 1973 CISL Congress, Storti stressed the need 'to promote worker unity at the Community level, starting with the Economic and Social Committee, in order to counter the unity of employers with a unitary stance of the representatives of the interests of the European and Community trade union

14. The 'Unitary federation CGIL, CISL, UIL', formed in 1972, entered a period of crisis at the end of the 1970s and was finally abandoned between 1984 and 1985 (Ciampani 2006: 222–223).

15. The documents on the relations between ETUS and the European organisation of ICFTU/WCL are in KADOC, ICV/WVA, 78.

16. See ASN CISL, CES, A85/1 and A85/2.

17. In reference to the WFTU congress in Varna, 15–22 October 1973, see also the article by A. Bonaccini (1974b).

18. Giancarlo Meroni's interview with the author, 4 January 2013/13 May 2013.

movement, thereby going beyond previous discriminations' (CISL 1973: 119–123). The experience of the 'unitary Federation' of the three major unions seemed to be the national basis in Italy of this 'international policy', but problems remained at a European level, as the CGIL was still a member of the WFTU. Despite this awareness, Lama wrote to the Secretary of the ETUC on 20 July to state that CGIL, as a member of the Federation CGIL, CISL, UIL, would welcome an initial exchange of views to establish possible relations aimed 'at encouraging the unity of the European workers in the ETUC'.¹⁹ This passage was framed in cautious language to be acceptable to the WFTU.

Moreover, a letter of 10 October had already announced that the ETUC was open to an initial meeting with the CGIL. On 20 November, in London, the delegation of the European trade union consisting of Feather, Storti, Vanni and Rasschaert listened to the intentions with which CGIL intended to approach the ETUC. New documents aimed at clarifying things were drafted at the two subsequent meetings on 3 March and again on 10 April 1974.²⁰ Within the ETUC the guarantees of other Italian unions with regard to CGIL did not seem sufficient to overcome the widespread reservations, prompting the European trade union to ask the ICFTU for its assessment on the eve of the extraordinary congress of 7 March 1974 (Ciampani 2006: 224). The outcome of the three meetings that were held between delegations of the ETUC and CGIL was discussed at the Executive Committee meeting of 9 May 1974. DGB, TUC, CISL and UIL shared the idea that, in any case, the Congress could choose to give a mandate to the subsequent Executive Committee to decide on the possible affiliation. The postponement of the decision to the executive meeting scheduled for 9 July was confirmed at the ETUC Congress (Sepi 1974; Meroni 1974a). Lama sent an explicit request to join the ETUC on 10 June 1974.²¹ Having abandoned WFTU membership status, CGIL dissolved the Standing Committee with the CGT and asked to join the ETUC on equal terms with the other organisations that were already members. At the ETUC Executive Committee meeting on 9 July, CISL supported CGIL's application, and recommended affiliating CGIL without waiting for ratification at the congress, when the DGB asked to postpone the decision because of CGIL's role in WFTU. It was the vice president Storti, with the support of the Vice-Presidents, who decisively rejected the opposition proceedings. Also part of the debate were the German objections, supported by Kersten for ICFTU and shared above all by Bergeron of FO and Houthuys of CSC, who feared communist infiltration in the organisation of the ETUC, which was still in the process of getting settled. In favour of admitting of CGIL were the FGTB and the Danish LO; the representatives of the Irish ICTU and the Austrian ÖGB were also in favour. For the CFDT, CGIL was taking on a role that was increasingly independent of WFTU and was now 'capable of playing a responsible role at the heart of the ETUC'. His confederation counted on his Italian colleagues' 'guarantee' that 'CGIL will democratically accept the policies pursued by the ETUC'.²² UIL was in favour of accepting CGIL "not only to strengthen its policy at Italian level but above all because it wishes to strengthen the ETUC's unity of action at the European level'. Storti also confirmed the affirmative vote of CISL, supported by the TUC. Strategies and expectations of transversal orientations that broke with the traditions of Labour, Social Democratic and

19. See ASCGIL nazionale, Atti e corrispondenza, 1973, Rapporti con i Paesi dell'Europa occidentale, 157.

20. See ASCGIL nazionale, Atti e corrispondenza, 1974, Rapporti con i Paesi dell'Europa occidentale, 157.

21. The letter is in the documents of Executive Committee of the ETUC, 9 July 1974, ASN CISL, CES, A96/1. A copy with Italian text in ASCGIL nazionale, Atti e corrispondenza, 1974, Rapporti con i Paesi dell'Europa occidentale, 157.

22. Executive Committee of the ETUC, 9 July 1974, ASN CISL, CES, A96/1.

Christian unions all overlapped in the vote on the question of CGIL's affiliation (Ciampani 2015). The proposal required two-thirds of the votes to pass; in other words, the approval of 18 of the 28 representatives present at the ETUC Executive Committee meeting: there were 21 votes in favour. Among the contrary votes, besides the three members of the DGB there were also the representatives of CGT-FO, LCGB of Luxembourg, CSC of Belgium and CNG of Switzerland.²³

The size of the Italian component of the ETUC thus increased considerably. There were also significant consequences for the three confederations themselves. ETUC membership forced CGIL, among other things, to take the size and the strategy of the European body into consideration and become more detached from the exclusively national debate for which it had been designed.²⁴ An article by Bonaccini in *Rassegna sindacale* in July 1974, announcing the event, retraced the rationale of the application for ETUC membership that Lama had signed and emphasised that now the unitary Federation CGIL, CISL, UIL had 'a common and immediate centre for international organisation' (Bonaccini 1974a). Still missing from the article was an explicit reference to European integration. An article written later by Meroni made up for lost time: 'However, the European dimension is now indispensable in order to solve any national problem. The constitution of the ETUC has become in this sense a reference model, but its activation depends on the capacity for initiative and the political will of its members' (Meroni 1974b). Without sparing criticism of the activities of the other unions and the United States, Meroni did not hesitate to use a new language for CGIL as he evoked a 'revival of Europe' (an expression used by CISL and UIL since the mid-1950s).

For the first time, a few CGIL leaders participated in the ETUC Executive Committee meeting of 25 October 1974: Lama, Boni, Didò and Bonaccini. At the operational level, the Italian trade unions began working together. In October, the international offices of CGIL, CISL and UIL announced the participation of their union representatives as delegates of the unitary federation to a meeting with the EEC Economic policy committee.²⁵ Despite this effort to gain more weight in European dynamics, the political platform of the unitary federation proved to be its weak point. On 19 December 1974, Storti wrote to the General Secretary of the ETUC announcing that the CGIL, CISL and UIL Executive Committee meeting of 12 December had adopted its report on relaunching trade union unity in Italy. In what was the last attempt at unification, he could not define a shared European programme for Italian trade unions. He stated that they actively promoted

shared commitments to peace, to peaceful coexistence, to the fight against residual colonialism, against dictatorships, in favour of trade union freedoms. We need to fully evaluate the results of unity at the international level; that is to say, within a framework where tensions and conflicts are certainly not inferior to those we experience at the national level.²⁶

23. In this sense, it should be noted that against the entrance of CGIL in the ETUC was a significant minority group that had supporters in various unions, including the 'free' trade unions (4 votes) and Christian trade union representatives (3 votes).

24. The documentation of the 'practices of affiliation' of CGIL-CES in ASCGIL nazionale, Segreteria confederale, Atti e corrispondenza, 1974, Rapporti con i Paesi dell'Europa occidentale, 157.

25. In the presence of the vice-president of the Commission Haferkamp, Baduel Glorioso (CISL) and Meroni (CGIL) had spoken for the unitary federation. See the document in ASN CISL, CES, A96/2.

26. The letter in IISH, ETUC 1269.

The mediation of the CISL had thus led to very modest results, especially in light of the guarantees offered to European trade unions as recently as the previous 9 July.

In the world of Italian trade unions, therefore, the original ‘choice for Europe’ expressed by CISL and UIL was now joined by the ‘European choice’ of CGIL (Ciampani 2010; Del Biondo 2010). An asymmetry remained, however, due to different historical paths and strategies. In the following years all this would produce contradictions – thinly veiled by public rhetoric – in the action of the national trade unions (where CGIL had the most members) and in the action of the European trade unions (where CISL and UIL could rely on a dominant position). Of course, the entry of CGIL in the ETUC did significantly raise the representative (and financial) weight of the Italian trade unions. For this reason, UIL and CISL could cultivate ambitions of an increasingly decisive role in Europe. The policy of the trade union led by Lama with regard to European initiatives appeared to be subject to Labour and Social Democratic initiatives, but a path leading to new alliances for CGIL was now open. Considered as a whole, the different paths followed by the Italian trade unions to arrive at a common representation in Europe and the common political push to gain positions of power within the ETUC posed the same question again for Italian trade unionism: are we in favour of the ETUC or only inside the ETUC?

3. ETUC and Italian unionism in the European crisis

Beginning in 1974, the Italian trade unions contributed to the efforts of the ETUC to achieve internal cohesion and, simultaneously, to appear effective in their relations with the European institutions. CISL, CGIL and UIL worked together on the question of ‘European energy policy’, which was a priority for the ETUC as soon as it was formed and had strong political connotations (although it also highlighted the difficulty the European unions had in implementing concrete action following their analysis of the situation).²⁷ In 1975, moreover, they participated with other unions in the debate on the creation of the Dublin Foundation and the CEDEFOP, as well as in the discussion of the ETUC regarding the creation of the European Trade Union Institute.²⁸ Furthermore, the Italian trade unions worked together again for the new Tripartite Economic and Social Conference, preparing a document as the unitary Federation CGIL, CISL and UIL in November 1975.²⁹ Granting space to CGIL’s demanding attitude, the central demand to associate the unions with the processes of economic decision-making, both at the political and business levels, demonstrated the force of attraction of CISL’s cultural perspective.³⁰

The three Italian unions took on a political and organisational role within the ETUC, competing at the European level with the unions of France and the Nordic countries. Following the death of Alfred Misslin, at the end of March 1975 Storti, in the role of vice-president,

27. See the different positions of TUC, Italian and Nederland unions for the Executive Committee meetings of 6 February and 24 April 1975 in ASN CIS, CES, A97/1 – A97/3; see also ASCGIL nazionale, Segreteria confederale, Atti e corrispondenza, 1975, Rapporti con i Paesi dell’Europa occidentale, 162.

28. See the documents of the discussion at the Executive Committee meeting of 26 February 1976 to the Executive Committee meetings of 9/10 February 1978 in the ASN CIS, CES, A99/1 – A103/2.

29. Draft and final documents in ASCGIL nazionale, Atti e corrispondenza, 1975, Rapporti con i Paesi dell’Europa occidentale, 172, e ASN CISL, CES, A98/4.

30. See Osservazioni di CGIL, CISL, UIL, al Comitato esecutivo del 14 novembre dell’ETUC, ASN CISL, CES, A98/4.

initiated the process of replacing him in the secretariat of the ETUC.³¹ The following May, Vanni, for UIL, proposed Dario Marioli, a union representative active in Switzerland. The nomination was made in agreement with CISL and CGIL, and was thus presented as an Italian proposal. The debate on the nominations officially began in the ETUC on 30 September.³² The idea of nominating Kulakowski to the general secretariat soon appeared impractical, though on November 20 he was proposed by CFDT and CSC as deputy secretary in light of the possible withdrawal of Carlsen at the next congress. At that point, the position of CISL became crucial as a bridge between the Christian and free trade unions of the ETUC and as an ambitious reference point for unions in the Mediterranean region.³³

Storti, however, had worked in conjunction with CGIL, CISL and UIL in order to take an important step.³⁴ Once the procedures for the European Trade Union Congress the following year had begun, on 18 November 1975 the three Italian confederations proposed Baduel Glorioso, who had a long history as head of the International Department of CISL, as General Secretary of the ETUC. On 3 December 1975, the General Secretary of CISL wrote to Salanne and Houthuys to confirm support for Kulakowski and reiterate the nomination of Baduel made by CGIL and UIL: 'This nomination ... will be confirmed if at the next meeting of the Executive Committee no nomination is submitted of a leader elected by any other national Confederation'.³⁵ The Italian position emphasised the need for strong leadership and did not seem entirely satisfied by the role of president of the union in Luxembourg. After Rasschaert's official opening message, Assistant Secretary Carlsen took over the secretariat until the congress. The Italian candidate was withdrawn in December and the Italians endorsed the candidacy of Hintersheid that was to be proposed at the congress. Kulakowski accepted the post of General Secretary of the CMT. The British Peter Coldrick had obtained entry into the ETUC secretariat, and at the congress he was joined (with unanimous consent) by the Frenchman François Staedelin and by Dario Marioli of UIL. Storti was confirmed vice-president of the Executive Committee.³⁶ The Italian position had a significant political role and could now benefit from being an operator in the union structure in Brussels. CGIL, which still appeared dependent on the two other Italian confederations at this level, increased its political weight in western Europe and established new relationships, while maintaining the existing ones with the unions of socialist countries.³⁷

Soon, however, the dissatisfactions of the Italian trade unions resurfaced concerning the compromise on the General Secretary, which did not satisfy their push for a stronger leading role of the ETUC with regard to institutions, employers and political forces in Europe. In October 1977 the criticism of Hinterscheid's bureaucratic management of the European trade union had already been manifested publicly in two articles published in CGIL's

31. Minutes of the ETUC Executive Board of 20 March 1975, sent by Baduel Glorioso to CGIL, in ASCGIL nazionale, Segreteria confederale, Atti e corrispondenza, 1975, Rapporti con i Paesi dell'Europa occidentale, 157.

32. See ASN CISL, CES, A97/4.

33. About the position of CISL in the Mediterranean area see Nota interna dell'Ufficio Relazioni internazionale della CISL in ASN CISL, CES, A97/1.

34. As demonstrated by the correspondence between Storti and CFDT and CSC from November–December 1975, in the archives of the CGIL. ASCGIL nazionale, Segreteria confederale, Atti e corrispondenza, 1975, Rapporti con i Paesi dell'Europa occidentale, 157.

35. See the documents in ASCGIL nazionale, Segreteria confederale, Atti e corrispondenza, 1975, Rapporti con i Paesi dell'Europa occidentale, 172, and in the dossier of Executive Committee meeting of 27 February 1976, ASN CISL, CES, A99/2.

36. See the debate in Executive Committee meeting of London, 21 April 1976, in ASN CISL, CES, A99/4.

37. See the articles of Bonaccini, Meroni and Magnani into special issue of *Rassegna sindacale* of 29 September 1977.

Rassegna sindacale and CISL's *Conquista del Lavoro*.³⁸ The General Secretary of the ETUC appeared clearly affected by the method and content of the public attack. In practical terms, the Italian trade unions had launched a political signal to ensure that ETUC decisions were not made without their participation. This Italian need derived principally from the political value attributed to it by Bonaccini, who was pushing the Communist current of CGIL towards European social democracy, and by Gabaglio, who sought to manage the change in balance of the two 'souls' of CISL.

In January 1977, Storti resigned at the CISL General Council. His position as Vice-President of the ETUC passed to his successor, Luigi Macario, former leader of FIM, confirmed as head of the Italian confederation at the Congress held the following June. In July, Gabaglio was 'put in charge of international activities': in the following years he signed the confederal secretariat's report on CISL's 'international union policy' (CISL 1981).³⁹ The activities of the International Department, which had until then been carried out under the tacit authority of the General Secretary, soon took on a more political character.⁴⁰ On one hand, he favoured unitary action at the European level, while on the other he promoted greater CISL participation in the international arena through initiatives increasingly articulated and coordinated within the unitary confederation.⁴¹ At the beginning of 1978, the CISL, on behalf of the unitary federation, also proposed Domenico Valcavi as the first Director of the ETUI. The application was withdrawn the following April to contribute to a unitary decision in favour of Koepke, from Germany.⁴² On 18 October 1978, however, Bauduel Glorioso left CISL – not without some friction – when she was elected President of the European Economic and Social Committee.

Lama's speech at the II ETUC Congress of April 1976 had left the impression that CGIL, in its relations with the free trade unions, was seeking the credibility and the political legitimacy that it did not have in its own country, where it lived in the shadow of the PCI (ICFTU 1979: 322–326). On the occasion of a conference sponsored by the Gramsci Institute and CDRL on 'the participation of workers in business decision-making' (Milan, 4–5 February 1978), Meroni presented a report on European experiences of participation, drawing attention to the European economies and indicating a new path towards social democratic trade unionism (Ferri *et al.* 1978).⁴³ CGIL's withdrawal from WFTU, which had been prepared on the basis of socio-economic dynamics, finally occurred in March 1978, on the eve of the first European Employment Day, 5 April 1978. For part of the CGIL leadership it was necessary to go beyond the stage of an instrumental policy concerning the European Community and to adhere to the idea that 'the unity of Europe on the basis of specific economic and social policies is an essential condition for resolving the crisis in Italy, but also for raising the question of the methods and objectives of the development, at national and international levels, in correct proportion to its current dimensions' (Meroni 1979: 93–95). The original CISL approach made headway in the wing of CGIL that aspired to a social

38. See the articles in IISH, ETUC, 1269.

39. The attention paid to the Italian initiatives by the Secretariat of the ETUC are in IISH, ETUC 1273.

40. In support of his political action, in January 1979 Gabaglio requested all the previous documents missing from the archives for the period 1973 to 1978, IISH, ETUC, 1269.

41. Gabaglio's international initiative was reinforced between 1977 and 1978, when Angelo Gennari, Antonio Miniutti, Franco Chittolina, Giacomina Cassina and Luigi Cal joined CISL's International Department (Ciampani 2000).

42. See the documents of Executive Committee meeting of 13–14 April 1978 in ASN CISL, CES, A103/4.

43. Also participating in the important meeting were Bassetti, Carli, Signorile, Giugni, Trentin, Benvenuto and Merli Brandini; their speeches were cited in the concluding remarks made, on behalf of the PCI, by Giorgio Napolitano.

democratic approach, after the 1976 Congress of the ETUC: trade union independence, the centrality of sectoral and company-level bargaining and participation in socio-economic decision-making (Meroni 1978).

In view of the third congress of the ETUC in Monaco (14–18 May 1979), however, the difficulty in achieving a unitary representation of CGIL, CISL and UIL in the European trade union was again evident, which had considerable political and statutory implications (an Italian representation under the formal pretence of a single affiliation was unthinkable). Anyway, between 1978 and 1980 the idea began to spread among the leaders of the three Italian unions that the ETUC should not be merely a bureau of officials, but a real union association structured as a confederation. In summer 1979, the beginning of open talks between ETUC and UNICE to explore the possibility of bilateral agreements at the European level contributed to progress in this direction.⁴⁴ Meanwhile, the Italian union movement had launched a new joint initiative that created great difficulties for the ordinary management of the ETUC. A letter from the unitary federation CGIL-CISL-UIL of 15 June 1979 supported the idea of a rotation among the three Italian confederal secretaries in the office of Vice-President of the ETUC, creating a serious problem for the meeting of the ETUC Executive Committee in Geneva of 27–28 June 1979. The Executive Committee took note of the decision of the ‘Italian federation’, but chose to put on record that ‘the principle of rotation of ETUC vice-presidents has not been adopted’ when Carniti was elected unanimously as one of its vice-presidents. A year later, however, at the Executive Committee meeting of the ETUC of 9–10 October 1980, Carniti presented his resignation, declaring that the previous non-adoption of the principle ‘does not mean a refusal’ and proposed the candidacy of Lama on behalf of the federation CGIL, CISL, UIL.⁴⁵ The Italian attitude had become a model: even Thomas Nielsen (LO, Denmark) resigned to make way for Tor Halvorsen (LO, Norway). This time the new situation did not give rise to debates on the rotation of vice-presidents and thus, for the first time, in December 1980 CGIL had its leader, Luciano Lama, within the decision-making bodies of the ETUC.⁴⁶

The apex of possible collaboration between the Italian trade unions at the European level was reached, perhaps, in June 1980, when maximum publicity was to be given to events related to European trade unionism in a crowded square in Venice packed with members of the three Italian trade unions. Participating in the event was the President of the ETUC, Wim Kok, in the context of the first EU summit meeting with a delegation of the European trade union.⁴⁷ In the meantime during the so-called *Anni di Piombo* (Years of lead) – characterised by terrorist attacks and the consequent policy of ‘national solidarity’ (after the PCI failed to overtake the DC at the polls) – tensions between the unions stemming from their links with political parties were renewed on the eve of the first elections of the European Parliament. In April 1979, Baduel Glorioso informed the ETUC of her European candidacy as an independent PCI candidate and on 2 May 1979, Macario announced to Hintersheid his decision to run for DC with the intention of electing figures from the world of trade unionism to the European Parliament.⁴⁸ Furthermore, during that

44. IISH, ETUC, 2091–2092.

45. ASN CISL, CES, A108/4.

46. See the ETUC meetings of 4–5 December 1980, ASN CISL, CES, A108/5 and A108/6.

47. See ASCGIL nazionale, Segreteria confederale, Atti e corrispondenza, 1980, Rapporti con i Paesi dell’Europa occidentale, 123, and press review in ASN CISL, CES, A108/2.

48. The letters in AIISH, ETUC, 1269.

same period Mario Didò, too, left CGIL to become a PSI candidate, as did Aldo Bonaccini as PCI candidate.⁴⁹

In 1980 the unitary federation entered a period of crisis in Italy due to CGIL's opposition to CISL's participatory and anti-inflationary policy, led by Pierre Carniti (who had overcome the internal divisions with Franco Marini, Deputy General Secretary)⁵⁰ and the energetic anti-government protests of the PCI (Saba 2000: 273–296). The CISL, with Carniti and Gabaglio representing all the Italian trade unions in the Finance and Management Committee of the ETUC, in 1980 became the central force in anchoring unified Italian trade unionism to a European perspective, a concept that it had developed together with CGIL and UIL in the three previous years. At the beginning of 1981, when a replacement had to be found for Marioli as secretary of the ETUC, the unitary federation CGIL, CISL, UIL proposed the candidature of Antonio Miniutti, to which a British objection was made, requesting that qualified candidates should be considered and not only those sustained by affiliated organisations. The Executive Committee did not sustain the British objection, finding it appropriate that confederation members should be responsible for the appointment of the political secretaries of the ETUC: in February 1981 Miniutti was elected unanimously, except for three British abstentions.⁵¹ UIL prepared for the succession of Giorgio Benvenuto from Lama as Vice-President of the Executive Committee, which occurred at the meeting of 8–9 October 1981.⁵²

The repositioning of the Communist Party in Italy after the European elections called into question the trends that had favoured CGIL's unitary European presence. The crisis between the Communist majority and CGIL's reformist tendencies exploded publicly after 17 December 1980: FLM (the unitary body of metalworkers, members of CGIL, CISL and UIL) decided to affiliate with the International Metalworkers' Federation, related to ICFTU. The tormented approval of CGIL led FIOM and FLM to implement the initiative, but provoked the condemnation of *L'Unità* in an unsigned article published in the PCI newspaper and the strong protests of communist activists and trade union leaders.⁵³ This serious dissent put a strain on the policy of the coordinator of the CGIL International Office. The birth of Solidanośc and developments under way in Poland also emphasised the limits placed on the reformist current in CGIL, which had confidence in Communist reformism in eastern Europe countries.⁵⁴ The proclamation of martial law imposed on Poland against the union of Lech Walesa provoked a crisis in the *Ostpolitik* of Italian trade unions, which, although selective, had CGIL as its natural protagonist. In Brussels again in September 1981, Meroni decided to withdraw from the union after further disagreement on economic and international policy. Following the X Congress of the CGIL (16–21 November 1981) Michele Magno became responsible for the International Office, accompanying Militello to the ETUC meetings.⁵⁵ It fell to Magno to defend his organisation against the accusations of CISL concerning CGIL's

49. See *Rassegna sindacale*, 17 May 1979, 61–62.

50. Speaking against the solidarity fund launched by CISL was, for the IRES CGIL, M. Magno, Per la crisi dell'accumulazione il sindacato holding non è una risposta, *Rassegna sindacale*, 6 November 1980, 9–10.

51. See the ETUC meeting of 12–13 February 1981, in ASN CISL, CES, A109/2 and A109/3.

52. ASN CISL, CES, A110/2. It had been Benvenuto, General Secretary of UIL since 1976, who had established a real international office in the union; interview with Antonio Focillo, 10 December 2012.

53. See *Rassegna sindacale* of 18 December 1980 and of 5 February 1981.

54. See the articles by G. Meroni in *Rassegna sindacale* of 18 June and 30 July 1981.

55. *Rassegna sindacale*, 17 December 1981, 23.

presence at the XVII Congress of Trade Unions of the USSR, three months after the repression of the Polish trade union.⁵⁶

On the eve of the ETUC Congress in 1982, the unitary Federation retained its ability to represent the Italian unions in Europe, successfully opposing the independent trade union CISAL's request for affiliation, which had applied for membership to gain international recognition that could be used at national level.⁵⁷ The heads of the international activities of CGIL, CISL and UIL, Emilio Gabaglio, Michele Magno and Renzo Canciani, in 'making an assessment of the international policy of the federation' had to acknowledge the existence of 'differences in dialectics, opinions and emphasis' regarding the global bipolar situation, and (in CGIL's revived language) in regard to western Europe (Wittemberg 1982: 29). The necessary confirmation of the unitary tradition of Italian trade unions in the ETUC therefore did not prevent CGIL and CISL from supporting, along with the British unions, the admission of the Spanish union Comisiones Obreras (CCOO) to the ETUC, despite the reservations of UIL and the opposition of the socialists of UGT. CISL, in any case, called for a new leading role of the ETUC: 'We want to discuss the relaunch of the Community at the next Congress of the ETUC; if the ETUC did not exist, it would be necessary to invent it.' (Wittemberg 1982: 30) Of course, the ETUC had to refine its tools and its representativeness: at the assembly of its leaders in 1981, CISL, referring to the unitary dimension of the European experience and the strength of additional affiliations, reiterated the belief that the ETUC would 'become a real trade union organisation – and not just a linking organisation' (CISL 1981, 423).

Keeping the focus on proposed amendments to the Constitution and policies aimed at promoting stronger claims-based union action on the part of the ETUC, the CISL proposed a form of greater cohesion between the confederations that was not limited to seeking the lowest common denominator between the different positions. In this way, this initiative managed to unify not only the Socialist protagonism of UIL under Benvenuto (Nenci 1982), but also the concerns of CGIL, whose efforts led them to ask a question that had been repressed until then: 'And what are we going to do in favour of Europe?'⁵⁸ A journalist from *Rassegna sindacale* who had long followed the international relations of the trade union tried to provide a summary of its activities during the 1970s, while its leaders were still at the Hague Congress of 19–22 April 1982, writing: 'And does the CGIL ... also have what it takes?' ... What we want to know is how much have we really done to instil trade union consciousness in millions of Italian workers.' Following the reasoning of Gabaglio explicitly – on the need for the ETUC – CGIL's magazine now observed the 'detachment of the ETUC from the real problems of the people' and the 'responsibilities of the national unions', in order to conclude: 'We must look at ourselves critically.' Moreover, the inadequacies of the ETUC appeared evident, and the work of the congress did not dispel any doubts.⁵⁹ 'The Hague Congress did not meet expectations', wrote Gabaglio in the CISL newspaper. It was necessary that the ETUC could 'be progressively transformed into a real trade union centre with a European dimension, able to identify and pursue common objectives, but also to promote and guide the struggles required to achieve them'

56. See the issue of *Rassegna sindacale* of 14 January 1982 and the special issue of 1 May 1982, ten years after the birth of the unitary federation, which appeared in the magazines of CGIL, CISL and UIL.

57. ASN, CES, A111/1.

58. This was the title of the article by Raul Wittenberg, the *Rassegna sindacale* journalist, in accordance with the direction taken by Meroni, in the issue of 22 April 1982.

59. Interview between G. Lauzi and G. Debonne, in the socialist newspaper *L'Avanti*, 23 April 1982.

(Gabaglio 1982). In this direction, the Italian trade unions were determined to play a greater role in European trade unionism.

4. Unions and social dialogue in Europe

The way in which the policy proposed by the Italian union movement in the early 1980s was determined is evidenced by two factors. At the top level of the European trade union, which in June 1983 accepted the principle of rotation of the three Italian trade unions, proposed 'on a regular basis' by the unitary federation for the office of vice president after having elected Carniti at the Congress.⁶⁰ At local level, the start of a European regional policy had favoured the creation in 1976 of the first Inter-regional Trade Union Council (IRTUC) involving the border regions of Germany, France and Luxembourg. In 1982 the first Italian cross-border trade union council was established to address issues related to inter-regional work in Lombardy and Canton Ticino. CGIL restrained a similar initiative that had been launched in Piedmont and Rhône-Alpes by CISL and CFDT, which would take form only in 1992 with the IRTUC Piedmont, Rhone-Alpes, Valle d'Aosta (Ciampani, Clari 2012: 10–15). The growth of the IRTUCs was brought to the attention of the Executive Committee of the ETUC in autumn 1982, but the debate over their relationship with the trade union organisation in Brussels began only in December 1983.⁶¹

This correspondence between Italian unionism and increasing local implementation of European initiatives,⁶² however, was accompanied by difficulties between the national confederations and the ETUC, which acknowledged in September 1982 that the demands made at the national level rarely made 'evident the European dimension of its demands'.⁶³ Moreover, relations between Italian confederations had begun to deteriorate. Between 1983 and 1984, CGIL had taken part in the negotiations between unions and the government to lower inflation, refusing at the last minute under pressure from the PCI to sign a cooperation pact with the Craxi government. This fact led to an internal conflict with the socialist current of CGIL and the final break-up of the CGIL-CISL-UIL unitary federation: the communist current, having supported a referendum in 1985 to abolish the decree passed to freeze the sliding-scale mechanism, was disoriented by the negative result obtained. In CISL, which had attempted to accelerate towards the creation of European trade unionism as the ETUC celebrated its tenth anniversary, the entry of Gabaglio in its national secretariat in the summer of 1983, along with other political duties, seemed to weaken the confederation's commitment regarding Europe.

New expectations of a revival of European initiatives were thus created also in the Italian unions following the acceleration called for by the French presidency in the first half of 1984 and especially after January 1985, thanks to the contribution of Jacques Delors and his colleagues in the European Commission (Degimbe 1999: 202–203). A rethinking of the strategies of the European trade unions was required to cope with the requests of the European Commission that had initiated the first talks in Val Duchesse. At the Congress of Milan,

60. ASN CISL, CES, A112/5-6.

61. ASN CISL, CES, A111/10 and A112/10.

62. The drive to Europeanisation now emerged from regional and local dynamics, as seen by the presence of Nino Sergi in the CISL's International Office in 1982.

63. See the documents of ETUC Executive Committee of 30 September and 1 October 1982, ASN CES, A111/7.

13–17 May 1985, despite posing certain conditions, the ETUC decided to continue the dialogue with European entrepreneurs and Community institutions, on the eve of the European Council that concluded with the approval of the Delors White Paper (Dølvik 1999: 115–116). The Italian trade unions, who hosted the ETUC Congress in 1985, re-examined and relaunched the ideas set forth in The Hague. Though CGIL, CISL, UIL prepared several amendments to the ETUC Constitution up until the eve of the congress, they were unable to put the question of bargaining at a European level on the agenda.⁶⁴ If they no longer limited themselves to drafting documents commenting on the proposals of Brussels or to proposing lobbying initiatives, it appeared possible finally to give European trade unionism legs (Irace 1985).

Benvenuto, for UIL, demanded ‘greater bargaining power for the EC’; Del Turco, for CGIL, asked the ETUC to be ‘increasingly more like a trade union’; Carniti, for CISL, had a heated clash with a representative of Force Ouvrière, arguing ‘that it was necessary to give the ETUC the power to negotiate’.⁶⁵ In response to those who felt that the time was not ripe for a discussion of this issue, the Germans seemed open to the prospect if it would in some way support their contractual and participatory model. Finally, it all came to nothing. Once again, however, CISL, at its X Congress (8–13 July 1985) pledged to revive the ETUC by developing ‘action that aims to let it take on a negotiating role, both in regard to Community institutions and to European employers, through the delegation of powers necessary to promote the growth of a true European dimension in the trade union movement’ (CISL 1989: 117–119).

New paths seemed to open up soon afterwards with the joint declaration of 12 November 1985 in Val Duchesse (Degimbe 1999: 208–210). With the introduction of Article 118 B in the EEC Treaty, defined in the Single European Act of February 1986, the Commission took it as its responsibility to ‘develop a European-level dialogue between the social partners, which could lead, if they consider it desirable, to conventional relations’. This passage of the Single European Act, which Savoini helped to formulate, recognised the right of European social partners to negotiate among themselves. For the Italian trade unions the goal was clear: stronger European unionism was needed to follow the path taken by the process towards European economic and monetary union. It was in this context that the Italian trade unions arrived at the ETUC Congress in Stockholm, 9–13 May 1988, where Delors spoke in a climate of optimism about the progress of European integration.⁶⁶ After the Congress, the ETUC had to deal with the acceleration of the integration process prompted by Delors by stimulating the social partners in different ways. In particular, the political Steering Group for Social Dialogue (which met for the first time on 21 March 1989) was created, with which the political governance of European organisations, and not only the social partners’ experts, was offered the opportunity to reach decisions that were binding for all players.⁶⁷

Overall, the Italian trade unions were unable effectively to influence the policies of European trade unionism after the push of the early 1980s. At the end of 1985, Miniutti resigned from the secretariat of the ETUC, but the proposal of an annual rotation for a political role, such as that of member of the secretariat, was rejected and specific nominations were requested from the confederations. In the end, the candidacy of socialist Ettore Masucci of

64. ASN CISL, CES A90/6 and A114/2-5.

65. See *Il lavoro italiano*, 20 May 1985, and *Rassegna sindacale*, 24 May 1985.

66. ASN CISL, CES A91/7.

67. The foundation process of the committee in IISH, ETUC, 700.

CGIL⁶⁸ was successful, and he joined the secretariat of the European trade union.⁶⁹ After the Single European Act, CGIL, CISL and UIL supported the campaign in favour of social Europe and participated together in the final demonstration promoted by the ETUC in October 1989. While CGIL was still disoriented by the changes in the internal secretariat and the collapse of the Berlin Wall, CISL resumed an initiative dedicated to European policy along with Focillo for UIL.⁷⁰ However, the Italian trade unions consolidated once again to take on a more proactive role in the ETUC between 1989 and 1992. In particular, after the 11th CISL Congress (14–18 July 1989), which confirmed Franco Marini as General Secretary,⁷¹ CISL created a Department of Community Policies, distinct from the international department, which was headed by Gabaglio.

The adoption of the Social Charter, subjected to the approval of the Community institutions in September and adopted in December 1989 by the European Council in Strasbourg, strengthened the principles of participation and consultation in decisions regarding social dynamics. Thus, while the political attention of the Italian trade unions was rekindled around the Charter, in the ETUC Hinterscheid did not seem to push towards a repositioning of unionism at the European level concerning the institutional evolution that the process seemed to involve. The executive committee of the ETUC seemed more like a sort of union academy and the debate was in danger of not keeping up with the evolution of the situation. Therefore, in that same month of December 1989 the ETUC created a Working Group, significantly named ‘For a more efficient ETUC’. This group was chaired by Stekelemburg and was promoted by the Germans and the Italians. Gabaglio participated with the unitary support of the Italian affiliated unions.⁷²

On that occasion, at the urging of Focillo for UIL, Lettieri for CGIL and Gabaglio for CISL, the Italian confederations worked intensively to develop unitary positions and to reach agreements with the other national confederations, as well as to establish the equal commitment and responsibility of the national affiliated confederations and the European sectoral federations. In December 1990, they also organised a session of the Executive Board in Rome, working in complete harmony with German, Austrian and Spanish colleagues.⁷³ CGIL, CISL and UIL created a deep understanding at that time, which was the result of the good personal relations between the leaders of their international offices and of the clear balance established between the confederations. The documents were discussed beforehand and each recognised the right of the others to speak on behalf of all three unions. The goal of giving European-level unionism a more participatory and negotiation-oriented character, going beyond the political perspective declared as its scope in the Social Charter, appeared to be aim of the Italian trade unions in the late 1990s.⁷⁴

68. For CGIL, led from March 1986 to November 1988 by Antonio Pizzinato, the question of its international role remained open.

69. See ETUC Executive Committee of 10–11 October 1985, in ASN CISL, CES, A114/9.

70. Focillo headed the International Department between 1989 and 1992 and expanded it by adding many components, divided according to sector; in this period, in particular, Cinzia Del Rio was involved in the UIL European relations activities. Interview with Antonio Focillo, 10 December 2012.

71. Marini had taken over from Carniti in July 1985 as General Secretary of the CISL and inheriting his offices at the ETUC.

72. See the ETUC meetings of 14–15 December 1989, ASN CISL, CES, A118/9, and the documents in IISH, ETUC, 704, and IISH, ETUC, 1034.

73. See the ETUC meetings in Rome, 13–14 December 1990, in ASN CISL, CES, A119/10–11.

74. See *Polis internazionale*, a UIL magazine, November 1990.

Moreover, the work to establish a European confederation with its own duties and tasks was fuelled by the progress made by the Political Steering Group for Social Dialogue promoted by Delors to complement and support the two working groups on social dialogue, created after the Single European Act. In September 1990, CEEP and ETUC signed an agreement on occupational training. As a result, in January 1991 joint opinions were drafted about new technologies, work organisation and the adaptability and flexibility of the labour market. A virtuous circle had been triggered, involving both innovation in Community institutions and the campaign for a more powerful ETUC, whose final report was examined between February and April 1991. When the reforms then made by the ETUC – with the inclusion of European Industry committees – did not meet the expectations of some unions, the winds of change began to blow on the leadership of European trade unionism, with Masucci resigning in February 1991. The DGB supported the Italian candidate Gabaglio for General Secretary of the ETUC, while the British preference was for Johan Van Rens (Dølvik 1999: 131–140). The vote of the Executive Committee was in favour of Gabaglio (with 27 votes in favour, nine against and three abstentions) and took place just before the ETUC congress in Luxembourg (13–17 May 1991), which elected him General Secretary.⁷⁵ The election of Gabaglio seemed to be a form of reward for CISL's pro-Europe orientation (it had just elected Sergio D'Antoni as its leader). It also constituted the culmination of the entire Italian union movement that continued to act in unison in the European context and was well aware of its representative capacity in terms of numbers and potential for a positive contribution. Of course, the history of CISL and its members had been a driving force of Italian trade unionism in European scenarios since the 1950s and this seemed to give it an authority that Gabaglio soon found himself exerting during subsequent events.

A relaunch of the principle of 'participation', which was a relevant element in shaping the ETUC, was supported by a sort of a genuine Italian network, close to CISL, for the development of social Europe, particularly active at various levels between 1989 and 1992 (Dølvik 1999: 113). Gabaglio was well aware of this particular historical moment and in March 1992 he went to represent the ETUC at the ICFTU Congress in Caracas. He emphasised the unique character of the European Community, which allowed for the construction of a European social union alongside an economic and monetary union. Meanwhile, CISL (who brought Enzo Friso to head the global trade union) and UIL became supporters of CGIL's request to enter into free trade unionism after the fall of the communist regimes in eastern Europe, a process that had begun ten years earlier (ICFTU 1992, 404 and 496).

The Intergovernmental Conference for the reform of the Treaty of the European Community had just begun and Delors wanted to know to what extent the social partners would have worked to promote the relevant debate. The culture of CISL surely helped to motivate the ad hoc group of leaders of European organisations that had been created, thanks also to their ability to penetrate into other Italians circles whose mediation and dialogue represented an important contribution. These included not only the action of Cassina and Cal in the Italian trade unions, but also the crucial determination of Gabaglio in the ETUC, of Pininfarina among entrepreneurs and of Savoini for the Commission (with the support of Vincenzo Saba for the Giulio Pastore Foundation) (Savoini 2000: 70–71).⁷⁶ An agreement

75. See ASN CISL, CES, A92/8 and A120/1-6.

76. Interview with Luigi Cal, 16 November 2012.

was signed on 31 October 1991 between ETUC, CEEP and UNICE, which was hailed at the ETUC Executive Committee of 5–6 December 1990 as ‘a success for the ETUC with regard to future social relations at the European level’.⁷⁷ The title of the document prepared by Jean Lapeyre at that time indicates the value given to the result obtained by the ad hoc group for social dialogue of the ETUC: ‘An agreement that paves the way for European collective bargaining’. A series of meetings began immediately to assess the consequences and find the means to finalise the agreement, the text of which had to be fully included in the Treaty. With the Social Protocol of the Maastricht Treaty – which caused the British government to opt out – the European social actors were given a new role at the Community level, which according to special procedures foreshadowed a kind of equality between legislation and the agreements between the social partners in some fields.

After the signing of the Treaty in 1992, the debate on European collective bargaining had become more intense within the ETUC: CISL and UIL pushed for realistically taking a step forward, but did not underestimate the difficulties. It was now clear that giving a greater role to the European trade union movement involved a transfer of sovereignty to the European level. At the Luxembourg European Conference on Collective Bargaining promoted by the ETUC to formulate a strategy on the subject (1–2 June 1992), even Walter Cerfeda of CGIL stated that a ‘stronger commitment to coordination of national bargaining should be aimed for’. Alfredo Belli for UIL stressed ‘the need for respecting national diversity and following a bottom-up approach’. Tiziano Treu, invited as an expert to express CISL’s perspective, proposed an approach based on ‘learning by doing’, without waiting for a ‘perfect legal framework’. This approach was in harmony with what Deputy Secretary Lapeyre had recalled: according to the ETUC, the agreements of 31 October expressed ‘a wish to be recognised as a European actor’ (Dølvik 1997: 244–257).

As is well known, the ambitious report was criticised by the Nordic trade unions. The decision was postponed to the Executive Committee meeting in London (2–3 December 1992) and, in the meantime, a written comment was requested of the various national unions.⁷⁸ The weight of CGIL, CISL and UIL was important because they were among those ‘which had been keen promoters of the 31 October agreement and of European negotiations’ and because ‘the Italian ETUC affiliates in the early 1990s represented around one fifth of the ETUC membership’ (Dølvik 1997: 263 and 293). They approved the report of the Luxembourg conference, but their assessment of the final compromise reached by the Executive Committee on 4–5 March 1993 was not identical. CGIL considered it a good result on the whole, one in which a cultural problem emerged related to political-institutional dynamics, according to Lettieri. For Cassina it was a ‘low compromise’ that conceded a great deal to the objections of the TUC, the DGB and Nordic affiliates (Dølvik 1997: 293–295). CGIL’s inclination to aim for European social legislation through political institutional relationships, perhaps, began to tip the balance common to the Italian trade unions at that time in favour of an approach based on negotiation and social dialogue. At the same time, a number of political and organisational factors gave rise to certain difficulties between the three Italian trade unions. CGIL proposed, in any case, to assume the burden of managing an ‘Italian’ European office, without, however, finding any support from the other confederations. However, in assessing the new phase facing the European social actors after Maastricht,

77. See the ETUC meetings of Amsterdam, 5–6 December 1991, ASN CISL, CES, A120/11-12.

78. The documents of ETUC Executive Committee, Brussels 8-9 October 1992 in ASN CISL, CES, A121/10.

CISL and UIL did not intend to relinquish their support of initiatives at the European level, though they seemed to run aground in complex mediations between the unions involved in the Italian debate.

5. ETUC as a social actor in the process of globalisation and Italian trade unions in multilevel governance

After the Maastricht Social Protocol, a new phase in the history of the ETUC seemed to have begun. In summer 1992 the social dialogue committee was formed. In September 1994 Directive 94/45/EC was approved to establish European Works Councils. Then in December 1995 the Agreement on parental leave was adopted, followed between 1997 and 1999 by agreements on part-time and fixed-term work. Following the Essen Summit, a new phase of social dialogue began with the recognition of areas of Community competence and responsibility in the field of employment. Moreover, with the 8th Congress in Brussels (8–12 May 1995), the Executive Committee of the ETUC could ‘vote by qualified majority on the results of the negotiations, thereby recognising the prevalence of the general interest of the European trade union movement over that of individual member trade unions’ (Ciampani and Gabaglio 2010: 144). As late as autumn 1994 CGIL, CISL and UIL seemed to be moving forward together, even planning an innovative European campaign to promote trade unionism throughout the world. At the ICFTU Congress (Brussels, 25–29 June 1996) Gabaglio proposed, on behalf of the ETUC, to move forward along the path of negotiations and collective bargaining in order to become global actors (ICFTU 1996: 87).

In Italy, ‘the demands of the ETUC’ – specifically, social dialogue and greater recognition of rights – were followed with interest. The Italian trade unionists gave their support to the Europeanisation of the trade union movement. In 1995, together with UNCE and CEEP, the ETUC tried to make Florence the European Centre for Industrial Relations, with the participation of Miniutti, but did not manage to achieve its definitive activation. However, the distinctions between the positions adopted by CGIL, CISL and UIL at the national level – especially in the union led by Cofferati, which was looking for a post-communist identity – were a direct result of the paths opened up by the ETUC, which ensured further articulation of internal dialogue. For CGIL, renegotiating the characteristics of Europe defined in Maastricht meant renegotiating the ‘model of European economic and political union’ through the exercise of a ‘contractual and political role’ (CGIL 1996: 84–87, 100–101). This approach was somewhat at variance with the positions expressed by CISL, at its thirteenth confederal congress held in May 1997. CISL reiterated the need for a union able to face the new process of ‘internationalisation of the economy’, rooting the choice of establishing a united Europe in a context of social cohesion. To meet the challenge of globalisation after ‘the end of the bipolar division of the world’, CISL again asked the ETUC to become ‘a partner both in collective bargaining and in concertation’ in Europe.⁷⁹ It showed the relationship of interdependence between the national, European and international levels, which CISL had always identified as the basis of its European activities. For CGIL, the European legal and institutional structure could support workers’ rights intended as an alternative to the global market.

79. See CISL, *Le Tesi congressuali*, in *Conquiste del lavoro*, 2–3 November 1996.

While the ETUC focused on becoming a valid dialogue partner with member state governments (through the summits in Luxembourg 1997, Cardiff 1998 and Cologne 1999), it also had to cope with the increasingly evident multiplication of levels of intervention, related to increasing globalisation. Each postponement of the settlement of these issues began to affect both the national perceptions of the national confederations and the strategies they outlined. There was also the question – completely unsettled at the end of the 1990s – of the level of effective implementation and impact of any action the ETUC could bring to bear on the national union level. Of course, it could no longer be limited to experiences such as the Euro-demonstration of trade unions in Brussels to support workers at the Renault plant in Vilvoorde. The ETUC Executive Committee of 12 June 1998 discussed the 1997–1998 report on European social dialogue at the sectoral and intersectoral level. Thus, ‘at the end of the 1990s, the construction of a Social Europe, which was the guiding thread of the ETUC and the unifying goal of its demands, met with further difficulties’ (Ciampani and Gabaglio 2010: 138–39).

In this context, CGIL, CISL and UIL decided to meet in January 1999 to discuss their contribution to the upcoming ETUC congress. The initiative seemed to be a kind of ‘negotiation’ between the Italian trade unions, as part of ‘the information and consultation process of all structures, both horizontal ones (a meeting with the various substructures had already taken place) and vertical’.⁸⁰ The document reveals the greater need for the involvement of trade unions, and the discussion did not refer merely to heads of secretariats and confederations’ international offices. At the same time, it reveals the difficulty of reaching a consensus on the ‘analysis of the two resolutions that will be presented to the Congress’, on the modification of the Constitution of the ETUC and on the ‘participation plan of CGIL, CISL, UIL’ in the congress debate. Moreover, the 9th ETUC Congress, held in Helsinki (29 June–2 July 1999), prompted a kind of internal political repositioning of the national unions within it. At the same time, new scenarios faced the ETUC in view of the advent of the single currency in financial markets (the circulation of the euro as a currency rather than just a unit of account began in 2001). The issue of so-called ‘macroeconomic dialogue’ was also considered part of the ‘concertation procedures’. On the eve of the Congress, the Italian trade unions proposed amendments to the constitution to complete the reforms initiated in 1991 with a view to enabling the ETUC to exercise greater ‘union leadership’ and equipping it with more ‘standing committees’, like those for the IRTCs and coordination of contractual policies, countering the tendency to define which European industrial relations system to implement.⁸¹ The 1999 ETUC Congress decided to create a special collective bargaining coordination committee ‘with the purpose of defining shared “guidelines” capable of focusing the demands in each country in order to give them greater cohesion and consistency’ (Ciampani and Gabaglio 2010: 144).

On the occasion of its twenty-fifth anniversary, the ETUC sought to gather information about national labour market contexts in order to bring its tasks to completion (Treu 1998), and managed to acknowledge the emergence of a process of Europeanisation in trade union action, as was also the case for the Italian unions (Regini and Regalia 2000). It was possible, too, to address the problem of wages and policies and link them to the action of

80. Circular letter of Giacomo Barbieri (CGIL), Luigi Cal (CISL), Carmelo Cedrone (UIL), 17 December 1998.

81. See the document CGIL, CISL, UIL Dipartimenti internazionali, *Proposte di modifica dello statuto e del funzionamento della CES*, March 1999.

affiliated unions (Pochet 2002). However, when it was time to consider the prospects for involving national trade unionism in the process that had been launched at the European level by the agreements of 1991, the debate under way in Italy again highlighted how the horizon of European trade unionism was still restricted to the need for coordinating collective bargaining (Hoffmann and Mermet 2001). For the Italian unions, the high point of European impetus seemed to end with the discussion of the Lisbon strategy, adopted by the European Council of March 2000.⁸²

In the face of strong economic growth between 1997 and 2000 – Italy was growing at 2.6 or 2.7 per cent per year – the ETUC should have negotiated national action plans and intervened about the resources necessary for development, which required a different perspective on the multiple levels of Europeanisation. In Italy, for example, ‘a third phase of development and consolidation of the IRTUCs [could be observed], which ran from 1991 until the early years of the millennium’ (Gilardoni 2009: 92). Moreover, in the late 1990s and the early twenty-first century, CISL’s International Department promoted a new approach to European dynamics and suggested that European issues be considered an internal dimension of the process of analysis and decision-making within the various sectors and areas of union intervention.

For its part, the ETUC acknowledged the standstill of European institutional action. ‘Since the end of the 1990s, the Commission has limited its intervention to the publication of “communications” on social policy and to the promotion of “consultations” that do not have operational consequences’ (Ciampani and Gabaglio 2010: 138–143). Only a few years later the Commission created a Fund for adjustments to globalisation, which was mainly symbolic. After 11 September 2001, dynamics of globalisation were imposed that did not seem manageable through social summits. Nor was ETUC participation as an observer in the work of the European Convention of 2002 sufficient, although Gabaglio managed to bring about the creation of an ad hoc working group on social Europe. With the Tenth Statutory Congress in Prague (26–29 May 2003) the ETUC reached the ‘end of a cycle’, and not only because of the new ETUC, as John Monks from Great Britain took over from Gabaglio (the ETUC secretariat welcomed within its ranks a member of CGIL, Cerfedda, who was unitarily designated). The dynamics of globalisation now required a repositioning strategy on the part of the ETUC as a European social actor at the centre of a strategy of multilevel governance, as the political limits of having allowed social dialogue to crystallise in institutions and regulatory procedures began to be felt.

These needs and limits emerged in the reaction of European trade unionism at the beginning of 2004 and caused Commissioner Bolkestein’s proposal for a directive to be blocked (Ciampani and Gabaglio 2010: 140–141). The Italian participation in the mobilisation of the ETUC against the Bolkestein Directive was prompt and articulated. CGIL, CISL and UIL moved together at the regional level and requested the ‘withdrawal of the Directive’. On the eve of the European demonstration of 19 March 2005, this sparked a political mobilisation ‘through the relationship with associations and civil society, with information campaigns and mobilisation’ that went well beyond the action of union representation. In this context, however, the European trade union movement could not prevent the Bolkestein Directive from being ‘taken as a negative symbol by all anti-Europeans: “That’s what Europe is, it’s Bolkestein.”’ The ETUC found itself in trouble: ‘I remember the demonstrations we

⁸² Interview with Giacomina Cassina, 16 November 2012.

held against Bolkestein in Luxembourg, then in Strasbourg; all were full of anti-globalisation protesters. There were slogans that were completely unacceptable.⁸³ Although CISL agreed with the ETUC's political pressure on the European Parliament, when it made plans to meet again in Strasbourg on 14 February 2006 it focused attention on the need to prevent the directive from interfering 'with labour law, with collective bargaining and industrial relations in the member states'.⁸⁴

In fact, the focus on the evolution of collective bargaining rendered Italian trade unions more sensitive to the risk of the ETUC becoming entangled in the web of European institutional procedures, thereby closing itself off in a position of mere political reaction to the neoliberal and conservative wave. In March 2007 CGIL's European Secretariat organised a study day in Bologna which sought to develop its traditional approach: 'The current situation and prospects of collective bargaining in European countries and in Europe.' In the end, CGIL drew closer to CISL and UIL in supporting collective bargaining as necessary for relaunching trade unionism as a whole. This led to the negative response to the European opinion polls on the subject of a minimum wage:

CGIL, CISL, UIL believe that setting a minimum wage – especially if it is established by legislation – is not the appropriate response to protect the most vulnerable workers. [...] Moreover, the establishment of a minimum wage would weaken collective bargaining and the role of the confederal trade unions, de-legitimising its authority on wage-related issues.⁸⁵

Italian trade unions, therefore, considered the Seville Congress, 21–24 May 2007, as a 'congress of transition', in which the need to reconcile 'the different union cultures' involved in the process of European enlargement was apparent: 'the mediation between different countries brings you to lower your goals', admitted Cerfeda. 'And the social culture', added the CISL General Secretary Raffaele Bonanni significantly, 'ends up being watered down'. It was thus up to Cerfeda (confirmed as secretary of the ETUC) to reiterate in the face of the risks of social dumping in Europe the common adage that had characterised the Italian union movement over time: 'greater union and collective bargaining coordination at a European level' was necessary to 'negotiate matters such as transnational mobility and lifelong learning'. The union led by Guglielmo Epifani found in the bitter words of Rinaldini the toughest criticism of the ETUC's ability to impact national unions: 'When a company closes down in one country, everyone is ready to send out sympathetic press releases, but then the unions of other countries heave a sigh of relief. [...] Either the forms of coordination evolve or they will be reduced to a mere exchange of information.'⁸⁶ On these issues, the three Italian trade unions – divided on different aspects of national trade union policy – now agreed. At the end of the Congress, the path towards 'a greater unionisation of the ETUC' emerged, 'to break out of a conception of the European trade union as a subsidiary function of Community legislative initiatives'.⁸⁷

83. *Idem*.

84. See News of CISL Lombardia, 19 January 2006.

85. See Salario minimo: CGIL, CISL, UIL, rispondono alla CES, in CGIL, Segretariato Europa informa, 9 March 2007.

86. See CGIL, Segretariato Europa informa, 1 June 2007.

87. CGIL report on Seville ETUC congress, 30 May 2007.

The Italian trade unions saw a confirmation of these prospects in the events of the *Viking* and *Laval* cases (Giubboni 2006; Dorssemont 2009). The response of the trade unions to European judicial rulings in labour and union matters could not simply be confined to debates or to calling for its own model of social relations. It was necessary for CGIL, CISL and UIL to seek greater correspondence between the preparation of new tools and strategic policy decisions in Europe. Consider for example the ETUC's promotion of the Social Development Agency (directed by the Italian Claudio Stanzani), which was given the task of monitoring the establishment of EWCs and, more generally, the implementation of the *acquis communautaire* in the field of workers' rights to information and consultation in undertakings.

When the European Parliament, in 2008, proposed the revision of Directive 94/45 on European Work Councils, in March the Executive Committee of the ETUC seemed to desire the revision of the Directive 'in the context of a negotiation between the social partners for a strengthening of social dialogue'. After the difficulties posed by Business Europe, however, in May the ETUC explained to the European Commission the reasons that led it to 'decline' its invitation and, instead, to request a proposal for a Directive.⁸⁸ CGIL, CISL and UIL supported the European trade union's pressure aimed at orienting the Commission and the Parliament. In the letter sent by the secretary-generals of the Italian confederations – Epifani, Bonanni, and Angeletti – to European Commissioner Vladimir Spidla on 23 May 2008 it was again affirmed 'an effective revival of European social dialogue'.⁸⁹ The Italian unions also perceived a temptation within the ETUC to 'abandon social dialogue' as the best way to promote the interests of workers and to conduct relations with the European institutions (Cilento 2009: 41).

The recognition of the open society that seemed to characterise the 'globalised' world seemed, in Italy, to encourage the European trade union movement to rethink its role and its objectives, in light of the impact that the European dimension came to represent in the economic and social activities of national social actors in a bi-directional perspective. 'It could make clear the confederal dimension necessary to multiply the strength of the trade union federations, and could encourage a "multilevel" social dialogue capable even of outlining major framework agreements in the context of the transnational mobility of enterprises'.⁹⁰ National confederations indeed do not always produce calls for innovation, but sometimes create serious obstacles to cohesive and coherent action. After the 22 January 2009 agreement signed by CISL and UIL on the reform of collective bargaining, CGIL, which had not fallen in line in order to justify its isolated mobilisation against the agreement, put pressure on the ETUC despite the continued mediation of unitary documents and the good relations between the international representatives of the three organisations. CGIL defined the agreement of the other Italian social forces 'insufficiently innovative and not very European', although the confederal secretariat of the ETUC itself had declared those agreements 'consistent with all the different resolutions approved on this topic by the ETUC executive committee', hoping that the Italian trade unions would find 'a unitary approach as quickly as possible' to combat the crisis and support the initiatives launched by the union at the European level.⁹¹

88. See unitary Document CGIL, CISL, UIL in Segretariato Europa informa, 13 June 2008.

89. Letter of CGIL, CISL, UIL, 23 May 2008, *ibid*.

90. Il bivio del sindacalismo europeo, *Sindacalismo*. Rivista di studi sulla rappresentanza del lavoro nella società globale, 5 January 2009, 6.

91. Letter from Monks and Cerfeda to Italian leaders Bonanni (CISL) and Angeletti (UIL), 13 March 2009.

If there was an objective difficulty at the European level in monitoring the effects of the European initiative on trade union action in companies and in the territories of the various European countries, the question still did not appear to be a priority for the protagonists of social action nationwide. The Report on Industrial Relations in Italy and Europe 2008–2009, prepared by CESOS on behalf of the Italian CNEL, did not emphasise the impact of the ETUC's work in the Italian context, despite the awareness of the participants in the study group of the important processes of Europeanisation under way in the national labour market.

On the eve of the Athens Congress, 16–19 May 2011, anyway, the Italian trade unions – each with different confederation histories and different local cultures and industrial sectors – supported a more realistic European approach in order to draw up the agenda of European trade unionism to develop international social relations. As can be seen in the recent work of the EESC (in which the presidency of Mario Sepi, 2008–2010, exercised an active role), the trends and the effects of 'globalisation' confirm 'the great validity and effectiveness of the principles which inspired the history and identity of the European Union' (Iuliano 2010: 141). Italian trade unions called for European trade unionism to be a leading actor in the European labour market, while remaining aware of the presence of different sensitivities among those who favoured a strengthening of the ETUC as a real union and others more inclined to support its coordinating role. Moreover, it is widely acknowledged in the Italian confederations that 'if we need more Europe on the political and institutional level, also the ETUC must become a more credible and demanding interlocutor, with a reinforced role and specific mandates' (CISL 2013: 17).

Finally, in the history of Italian trade unionism it is possible to trace a predominant attention to ensuring that the process of political and institutional decision-making at European level involves actors whose actions foster economic growth and represent the workers of Europe. Today, this focus has an impact on the need – which seems to be clearly felt within the ETUC as it enters its fourth decade – to identify and address the dynamics of interdependence between the different levels of socio-economic governance in order to achieve the successful participation of different actors. In this context, the issue now concerns the relationship between the rise of the trade union movement as a social actor in Europe and the awareness of the trade unions that a 'pro-European choice' is not made on a level different from that of confederal trade unionism and collective bargaining.

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Chapter 4

British trade unions and the ETUC

Richard Hyman

1. National context: an insular tradition

The relationship between Britain¹ and the rest of Europe has always been problematic. A widely held view is that island Britain is not really part of the European continent: 'Europe' is a foreign entity across the Channel. This separation links to distinctive political and economic traditions. Hall and Soskice (2001) contrast liberal market economies (LMEs) and coordinated market economies (CMEs), with the UK the European paradigm of a LME, while Albert (1993) identifies a confrontation between 'Anglo-Saxon' and 'Rhineland' capitalisms. These are oversimplifications – market liberalism is not unqualified, and the British labour movement, the longest established in Europe, can claim many achievements in securing workers' rights – but they do have heuristic value. Britain, like other English-speaking countries, has a common law system and a bias within economic jurisprudence towards the primacy of individual contracts. Private companies are the exclusive property of their owners, and the duty of managers is with few qualifications to maximise the financial returns to shareholders. This distinguishes the UK from the civil law regimes in most of western Europe, where the interests of other stakeholders are a legitimate concern of managements and where freedom of contract has less iconic status. An additional factor of importance is that while the British electoral system

1. Constitutionally there is a distinction between Great Britain (England, Scotland and Wales) and the United Kingdom, which also includes the six counties of Northern Ireland (and before 1921, the whole of Ireland). It is however common practice to use the two terms interchangeably. Often the label 'England' is applied to Britain (or the UK) as a whole, which is not appreciated by the Scots and Welsh.

with its ‘first-past-the-post’ method normally results in single-party majorities in parliament, in many European countries proportional representation typically leads to coalition government, creating an inbuilt bias against radical change to the institutional order of the kind seen in Britain in recent decades. This contrast underlies significant differences in approaches to industrial relations. ‘There is no such thing as society’, notoriously proclaimed Margaret Thatcher: an assertion which in much of Europe would be taken as evidence of insanity. The UK did not participate in the construction of the European Economic Community (EEC) in 1957, partly because of opposition to the founders’ ‘federalist’ ambitions; instead it took the lead in creating the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) in 1960, providing its first two secretaries-general. However, the government rapidly changed its mind and applied for membership in 1961 and again in 1967, on both occasions being blocked by the French veto. A third application (after de Gaulle’s resignation) was successful, accession taking place in January 1973.

Britain is widely regarded as the ‘awkward’ member of the European Union (EU),² resistant to the desire of most other members for enhanced regulatory competence. This was one of de Gaulle’s stated reasons for opposing the UK attempts to become a member in the 1960s, a view which seemed strongly validated by the Thatcher government two decades later. Britain has been described as a ‘Euro-sceptic state’ (George 2000), with widespread doubts about the value of EU membership and resistance to any further transfer of powers to supranational level. In both main political parties there has been a wide spectrum of views on EU membership. The Liberal Democrats have predominantly, though not universally, been strongly pro-EU. Conversely a single-issue fringe party, the UK Independence Party, which campaigns for withdrawal from the EU, won almost 17% of the national vote in both the 2004 and 2009 elections to the European Parliament (EP).

Among the Conservatives, Edward Heath (leader between 1965 and 1975) was the most pro-European of any party leader, before or after. He led the abortive negotiations in 1961–3 and signed the eventual accession agreement. But Thatcher and her successors were far more suspicious, or simply hostile, to European integration. In particular, the Thatcher and Major governments (1979–97) usually headed the resistance to proposals for strengthened employment regulation at EU level, as well as refusing to participate in EMU. Thatcher’s ‘free market’ ideology was at odds with the prevailing ‘social market’ orientation of most continental member states, even those with conservative governments, and this encouraged a broader hostility to what were seen as the ‘federal’ ambitions of the Commission and other EU governments, as well as a strong assertion of the primacy of national sovereignty. In recent years, the ‘Euro-sceptic’ tendency within the Conservative Party was reinforced. Before the 2015 election, David Cameron promised a referendum on EU membership, in the vain hope that this might unify the party. In the event, the vote in June 2016 resulted in a narrow majority for ‘Brexit’, followed by Cameron’s own resignation. What this means in practice remains highly uncertain.

Labour has always possessed a strong anti-EU tendency, partly because many on the left have viewed ‘Europe’ as incorrigibly business-oriented, regarding national autarchy as a basis for more progressive social and economic policy. Though the Wilson government of 1964–70 initiated the successful accession negotiations, the party then rejected the terms agreed when it returned to opposition. In 1972, left-wing pressure committed Labour to the principle of renegotiation of the terms of accession, to be followed by a referendum

2. The title ‘European Union’ was officially adopted in 1993.

on continued membership. The party also resolved not to send representatives to the EP (which was not yet directly elected).

The Wilson government, re-elected in 1974, did attempt to renegotiate the terms, (although not too vigorously) and the majority of the cabinet declared themselves satisfied with the modest changes approved. A referendum was held – the first time such a measure had been used in the UK – in June 1975, partly to resolve the intense internal party conflict on the issue; the result was a two-to-one vote to remain in the EU. Labour then ended its boycott of the EP.

Division on the issue continued, and the anti-EU tendency increased its strength after the 1979 election defeat. In 1980 the party conference voted for withdrawal, one of the reasons that led to the breakaway of a group of leading figures on the right (including Roy Jenkins, President of the Commission between 1977 and 1981, the only Briton to hold this position) to form the Social Democratic Party (SDP). The SDP achieved some short-term by-election successes but (given Britain's majoritarian electoral system) had little longer-term impact and it merged with the Liberals in 1988. Almost certainly, however, the defections from Labour increased Thatcher's dominance in British politics.

Labour fared disastrously in the 1983 election, in which withdrawal was a major manifesto commitment. Though until 1988 the official party policy remained in favour of withdrawal from the EU, the priority given to the issue declined sharply (Callaghan 2007: 224), allowing the party leadership to move towards a position of pragmatic accommodation. As early as 1983 the new party leader, Neil Kinnock, insisted that withdrawal could only be a 'last resort' (Haahr 1993: 103-4). Though Labour opposed the Single European Act, in practice its position shifted increasingly towards 'constructive engagement' (Daniels 1998; Haahr 1992). By the 1990s Labour was denouncing Conservative 'negative posturing' and insisting that the UK should be more positively involved in EU policy-making in order to 'set the agenda' (Hindmoor 2004: 150-1).

However, while the Blair government elected in 1997 reversed the 'opt-out' from the Maastricht social chapter, the UK continued to resist new employment legislation, and strove to dilute what it could not prevent. In line with the rightwards lurch of Labour party policy in the 1990s, Blair and Brown 'operationalised "constructive engagement" [with the EU] as a project designed to drive forward Anglo-American free market and low regulation policies in Europe' (Baker 2005: 26). In its approach to the single currency there was a partial continuity with the Thatcher era: though not opposing EMU in principle, the Labour government set stringent conditions for joining the euro (Howarth 2007: 50). Blair gave a commitment to hold a referendum before adopting the Constitutional Treaty, before the French and Dutch 'no' votes in 2005 made this superfluous. However, his successor Gordon Brown, who took over in 2007, insisted that this was unnecessary in the case of the Lisbon Reform Treaty – despite the considerable similarity between the two documents. Part of the rationale was the opt-out which the Labour government obtained (together with Poland) from the full application of the charter of fundamental rights – another indication of Labour leadership hostility to many of the principles underlying the European social model.

In the 2016 referendum, the party adopted a clear pro-EU line, though it ran a separate campaign from the government. Only a handful of MPs supported 'Brexit'. For many, however, 'Remain' was supported as the lesser evil, given widespread disaffection with the neoliberal trend in EU policy. Many of the small groups on the far left used this trend as an argument for supporting 'Leave'. The party leader, Jeremy Corbyn, newly elected on a left-wing platform, was widely viewed as lukewarm in his support for EU membership.

2. A distinctive trade union model

British trade unionism has a history dating back more than two centuries: the ‘first industrial nation’ gave birth to the first national trade union movement, and the character of industrial relations and trade unionism has long been distinctive. By comparison with most other countries, what is striking in the British case is historical continuity and the persistence of many long-established traditions that, in some respects, have been specific to individual unions.

In contrast to the revolutionary crises which occurred in many other European countries, in Britain the rising entrepreneurial class achieved economic autonomy and political rights peacefully and incrementally, and did not need to mobilise the working class as fellow contestants of the traditional order. Central to the transition from feudalism to capitalism was the *negative* principle of detachment of the (relatively weak and undeveloped) state from economic life: the doctrine of *laissez-faire*. This was carried over into industrial relations, running with the grain of the common law system within which the freedom of (individual) contract was paramount. This legal framework created a bias against collective regulation of employment conditions, making trade union organisation and action for many decades unlawful. The distinctive British route to the legalisation of trade unionism and collective bargaining was through negative ‘immunities’ rather than positive rights: creating a system known as ‘voluntarism’ or ‘collective *laissez-faire*’. As a corollary, collective agreements are not legally binding contracts, unions are not ‘agents’ of their members and there are no extension mechanisms to generalise agreements across whole sectors. Nor (until the recent application of minimal European provisions) has there been a legally prescribed system of workplace representation. Until the late twentieth century, the role of statute law in defining substantive conditions of employment (pay, working hours) was extremely limited and the legal basis of employment protection was likewise extremely weak; job security largely depended on scarce skills or collective strength. Britain also differs from most of continental Europe in that collective bargaining is detached from the welfare regime and labour market policy.

In one respect, British trade unionism is a unitary movement, with a single confederation, the Trades Union Congress (TUC) – formed in 1868 – representing almost all significant unions. But in other respects it is remarkably fragmented. From the 1890s (when official labour statistics were first compiled) to the 1940s there were over a thousand union organisations; and though numbers have been reduced substantially through a series of merger waves, there are still 170 (of which 54 are affiliated to the TUC). Most are very small but, conversely, there are 14 very large unions with over 100,000 members which account for 85% of the total. The earliest unions emerged as small societies of skilled workers. Later, ‘industrial’ unions (which, however, rarely covered every category of worker in their sector) were created in the major nineteenth-century industries and ‘general’ unions arose for lower-skilled workers excluded from the craft unions; then in the twentieth century there was a substantial growth of white-collar and public sector unionism. Mergers, and the efforts of old unions to expand into new areas of recruitment, have created an immensely complex map of trade unionism in which no ‘pure’ models exist. Moreover, despite the all-encompassing nature of the TUC, its affiliates have traditionally been jealous of their own autonomy, reluctant to accord it either functions or resources unless absolutely necessary. This has created major problems for its international role.

For over a century, most major unions (though not the TUC itself) have formally espoused socialist objectives and have been collectively affiliated to the Labour Party. Though

the party has never been social democratic in the continental sense, its policies have been comparable. Yet ‘voluntarism’ has been central to trade union identity, with ‘free collective bargaining’ a pivotal principle. This has meant, for example, that until the late twentieth century most unions were opposed to the idea of a statutory minimum wage. Effective collective organisation, ideally resting on a strong network of workplace representatives (shop stewards), was regarded as the best source of improved standards and of job protection. Cooperation with management was widely viewed with suspicion, though in practice pragmatic accommodation was the rule. In their years of greatest membership – the 1960s and 1970s – British unions could be described as both militant and moderate: militant in that strike action was often pursued in the early stages of negotiation rather than as a last resort, at least in major union strongholds in manufacturing; but modest in that struggles were often defensive or involved efforts to maintain a group’s position in the earnings hierarchy rather than attempts to change that hierarchy itself.

Over a long period, ‘voluntarism’ delivered results (Heery 2010: 550–1) – an important reason for the sustained belief that ‘Europe’ had little to offer British trade unions. However, the effectiveness of a system of industrial relations based on ‘free collective bargaining’ rested on important preconditions: a favourable employment structure, acquiescent employers and an ‘abstentionist’ state. The erosion of all these foundations thus posed major challenges. Rapid occupational and sectoral changes, the rise of more sophisticated and aggressive managements, and above all persistent government hostility, confronted British unions with an existential challenge. The Conservative governments between 1979 and 1997 introduced a radical programme of legislative changes designed to make effective trade union organisation and action extremely difficult. ‘New Labour’, in office until 2010, pursued ambivalent policies designed to encourage only ‘supply side trade unionism’ which served the interests of employer competitiveness (Ewing 2005; Smith 2009). Both governments also imposed extensive programmes of privatisation. Many managers utilised the new legal regime to exclude union representation, or at least to minimise the scope of collective bargaining. As in other countries, precarious jobs are increasing: though paradoxically the proportion of fixed-term contracts in the UK is low, since ‘permanent’ workers enjoy far less job security than elsewhere. Most recently, the savage austerity measures imposed by the 2010–2015 Conservative–Liberal government, and reinforced under the Conservative majority government elected in 2015, have threatened many areas of public services and public employment that are trade union strongholds.

Union density has almost halved since 1980 and, because of the virtual absence of sectoral bargaining and the lack of extension mechanisms, collective bargaining coverage has fallen even more sharply (Marginson and Sisson 2012). The number of shop stewards, on whom most unions have depended heavily for recruitment and representation, fell by over two-thirds between 1984 and 2004 (Charlwood and Forth 2009: 81). In the private sector, where union recognition still exists it tends to involve a form of ‘de facto enterprise unionism’ (Howell 2005: 132). Therefore, given the structural complexity of British trade unionism, formulating a coherent response has been extremely difficult.

3. British unions and European integration

British trade unions have shifted over time from predominant hostility to European integration towards substantial support, though with important continuing divisions, notably

over EMU and more recently over the Lisbon Treaty. It should be stressed, however, that debates over European issues have mainly involved a politically engaged minority; the bulk of union activity has focused on national or sub-national matters. Though the discourse of 'social partnership', once totally alien to the British tradition, now pervades much trade union rhetoric, Teague's argument (1989: 29) that there has been little 'Europeanisation of trade union behaviour' remains true.

Opinion towards European integration among the unions (as within the Labour Party) can be roughly classified under three groupings. A minority, primarily on the right of the movement, has been strongly in favour of British membership. A second, left-wing grouping has opposed the EEC/EU as a capitalist conspiracy or as a bloc dominated by economic conservatives, which would prevent the adoption of socialist policies by a future Labour government. Between the two has been a group (including much of the TUC leadership – the secretariat and the General Council) which has adopted a more calculative or pragmatic approach and has tended to pursue compromise between the opposing wings. The balance between the different tendencies has often proved unstable. It should also be emphasised that though European issues have generated much heat in trade union debates, this has not necessarily connected with the more parochial concerns of most members, nor with the day-to-day priorities of national unions in the representation of membership interests in collective bargaining.

The TUC gave qualified support to the formation of EFTA. The 1957 General Council report stressed the need for a full employment commitment in the EFTA agreement, including an obligation on Member States to adopt appropriate macroeconomic policies (Beever 1960: 271). Writing soon after the creation of the EEC, Beever (1960: 267) remarked that 'both Governments and trade unions in Britain are traditionally insular in their attitudes to the European continent and tend to believe that ties with the far-flung countries of the British Commonwealth are closer, and potentially more beneficial than any which would have to span the English Channel'. Concern with the Commonwealth link did not necessarily reflect imperial nostalgia but more importantly the fear that the Common Agricultural Policy and the imposition of tariffs on imports from the former colonies would raise food prices in the UK and – from a more internationalist perspective – would be a barrier to third world development.

In formal terms most British unions before accession were willing – or at least, did not refuse in principle – to approve EEC membership, but only if the conditions were acceptable. This position, often described as 'wait and see', was official TUC policy throughout the 1960s. This was consistent with the pragmatist stance: it was impossible to make an informed judgment until the terms were explicit.

As negotiations on the third and final application proceeded, attitudes among the 'centrist' TUC leaders hardened, with growing fears of adverse effects on export industries and the balance of payments (Fetzer 2007; Haahr 1993: 65-6). In 1971, Congress decided to oppose membership on the terms negotiated by the Conservative government. In the following year, two conflicting resolutions were both adopted: one calling for renegotiation of the accession terms, the other – despite the opposition of the General Council – rejecting EEC membership in principle (Teague 1989: 32). The 1973 Congress voted narrowly to boycott all EEC institutions (notably the Economic and Social Committee, then known as ECOSOC), against the wishes of the TUC secretariat: a policy driven by two major, left-oriented unions, the TGWU and AUEW (Mullen 2007: 103-7; Rosamond 1993: 422). Following this decision, the mining and steel unions, which had participated in the European

Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) consultative committee, agreed to withdraw. ‘The balance of trade union opinion... concluded that the EU was an undemocratic, bureaucratic extension of the interests of big business, designed to benefit multinational capital at the expense of citizens and workers’ (Whyman 2008: 26). An important policy issue on the left was the project of an ‘alternative economic strategy’, particularly associated with the industry minister Tony Benn, involving an expansionist macroeconomic policy, extensive nationalisation and directive planning, and controls over investment and financial flows. All of these, it was assumed, would be prohibited within the EEC (Haahr 1992; Whyman 2008).

The TUC rejected the outcome of the Wilson government’s attempt to renegotiate the terms of UK membership and called for a ‘No’ vote in the 1975 referendum. As noted above, the campaign failed decisively. Indeed the involvement of the TUC was relatively modest; and two expert analysts at the time (Butler and Kitzinger 2006: 114) wrote that ‘it was suggested that some secret concordat existed between Harold Wilson and Jack Jones [left-wing leader of the TGWU] to limit the area of battle’ in order to prevent a damaging confrontation between the Labour government and the unions. According to a conversation between a US diplomat and TUC general secretary Len Murray, the latter was anxious to moderate internal divisions and hence adopted ‘a “low-key” approach to the referendum’ (<http://aad.archives.gov/aad/createpdf?rid=90634&dt=2476&dl=1345>).

Immediately after the referendum, the TUC ended its boycott of EEC institutions, and nominated a top-level team to the ECOSOC. However, it still called for the reform of EEC structures to ensure greater democratic accountability, and for major changes in social, economic and agricultural policies. The argument of Dorfman (1977), contested by some other writers, is that TUC representatives in the 1970s nevertheless played a very active role within the Brussels machinery. However, the policies adopted by the annual Congress were less predictable. In 1981, and again in 1983, a majority voted for withdrawal from the EEC and this remained official policy for several years, although the TUC secretariat maintained a far more positive view.

The official position was redefined by the experience of the Thatcher government. As employment legislation in Britain, along with the monetarist bias of social and economic policy, became increasingly hostile to union aspirations, the implications of EC membership began to be perceived in an altered light. In addition, perhaps, the very fact of Thatcher’s virulent antagonism to ‘Europe’ made European integration increasingly attractive, while the possibility of a left-Keynesian economic strategy in one country seemed increasingly implausible in the 1980s (Strange 2007). Following the 1983 general election, in which Labour campaigned on a platform of leaving the EU but was heavily defeated, Murray called for a ‘new realism’ in TUC policies; one implication was that official Congress policy to leave ‘Europe’ must be abandoned, resulting in a ‘de facto pro-European policy’ (Teague 1988: 36). The TUC leadership had always been more nuanced than Congress itself in its position on European matters. Norman Willis, who succeeded Murray as general secretary in 1994 and had originally opposed British membership of the EEC, exhibited a ‘veritable intellectual revolution’ (Didry and Mias 2005: 152); he and his deputy, David Lea, displayed ‘a consistent support for the European cause’ (Taylor 2000: 255).

Using considerable ‘agenda management skills’ (Rosamond 1993: 424), the TUC leadership managed to outmanoeuvre the anti-EU tendency, and in 1988 the General Council agreed to invite Jacques Delors to address the annual conference. His speech (delivered in English) was both a challenge to Thatcher’s obstructionism (she made her notorious Bruges speech in the same month) and an appeal to British unions to support both the single

market and the social dimension (MacShane 1991). As so often, official TUC policy shifted radically and rapidly, with minimal debate. A detailed policy paper on the internal market, *Maximising the Benefits, Minimising the Costs*, was adopted by Congress, clearly accepting that Delors' promised combination of closer economic integration with a social dimension would prove beneficial for British workers. According to Rosamund (1998: 135), 'One of the most remarkable aspects of trade union engagement with the "1992" programme was the apparent consensus on the issue across the trade union movement'. The European Community was indeed described by one observer (Stirling 1991) as 'a new Holy Grail'.

As Mullen (2005, 2007) has demonstrated, debates on European issues at the TUC from 1988 onwards have stressed overwhelmingly the importance of the 'European social model' in providing a bulwark against the advance of Anglo-Saxon neoliberalism and as a source of new employment rights for British workers. As noted above, declining collective bargaining strength led most unions to abandon their traditional commitment to 'voluntarism' and to pursue statutory employment rights. Already in the 1980s, EU rules on the transfer of undertakings provided important protections for workers whose jobs were privatised; and many of the directives of the 1990s, though often merely codifying principles already established in most continental countries, had major implications in the UK. Two obvious examples are that there had never previously been a general statutory regulation of working time and that statutory mechanisms of information and consultation at company level were unknown. The TUC has pressed hard to counteract the opposition of both Conservative and Labour governments to effective European legislation on such questions, and more recently has argued strongly in favour of a directive covering temporary agency workers (though in June 2008 it signed an agreement with the CBI to support a directive giving agency workers equal rights after 12 months, rather than from day one as envisaged in Commission drafts). More generally it opposed the UK opt-out from the Maastricht social chapter, and supported the inclusion of an employment chapter in the Amsterdam Treaty.

The question of the single currency has been more divisive. In 1989, the General Council offered 'conditional support for EMU' (Mullen 2005: 182) and this was approved by Congress. Many affiliates, particularly in export industries, strongly supported membership; for example, a report by three pro-EMU unions in 2001 stressed the economic benefits but also insisted that 'rump states that do not belong to the single currency club will pack little punch' (Mulhearn 2004: 304). John Edmonds, leader of the GMB general union and regarded as pro-EC, commented at the 1992 Congress that 'if it is a choice between the economic and monetary developments of Maastricht and the control of the Bundesbank, then Maastricht by 6-4 gets my vote' – not a ringing endorsement. However, from 1996 the TUC leadership gave virtually unqualified support to EMU entry (Bieler 2006: 104), although Josselin (2001: 61) terms this 'a yes without enthusiasm'. Key arguments were that remaining outside weakened the UK position in export markets, and also consigned Britain to a second-class role in EU policy-making. For John Monks, TUC general secretary from 1993, the failure of the Blair government to commit to EMU at the outset 'is disappointing and there are real risks for Britain... It becomes increasingly obvious that only one decision can be taken: to join' (2000: 185). Nevertheless, TUC backing was not altogether unconditional: EMU needed to be accompanied by a strong social dimension; the Maastricht convergence criteria could be damaging unless interpreted flexibly; and the European Central Bank (ECB) ought to be made more democratically accountable (Bieler 2006: 104-5). As Lea put it (1998: 133, 138), EMU required an 'aligned process of completing the Social Union and of

fighting mass unemployment'; nevertheless he concluded that 'on balance, the TUC believes that Britain should join, if possible in the first wave'.

These conditions could be seen as largely rhetorical, since the prospects of achieving them were negligible in the political conditions of the late 1990s and 2000s. Whyman (2002: 475) commented that 'the trade union case for supporting EMU is fatally flawed, and its current leadership is basing its case for EMU on a number of questionable assumptions'. Accordingly, a significant minority of unions opposed EMU entry, primarily because of the restrictive nature of the Maastricht convergence criteria and the deflationary bias of the ECB, which were seen as a threat to employment. In addition, the largest affiliate (until 2007), UNISON, organising principally in the public services, has regarded EMU as an inevitable constraint on public expenditure and hence a threat to its members' jobs and pay (Mulhearn 2004: 300-1). The rail union RMT has likewise strongly opposed euro entry (Bieler 2006: 153-4; Josselin 2001: 62). In 1999 a campaign group was established, 'Trade Unionists against the Single Currency' (TUASC) (Howarth 2007: 62). Other union leaders attempted to sustain an intermediate position: for example Bill Morris, general secretary of the TGWU (which was a member of TUASC), insisted (1998: 182, 187) that while many criticisms of EMU were justified, the risks of staying outside were greater, and that the key question was the timing of EMU entry. 'The real criteria against which all claims need to be tested,' he added, 'is jobs. So the EMU debate needs to be sober and balanced.' Similarly John Edmonds, general secretary of the pro-EMU general union GMB, wrote (2000: 193) that 'going into the single currency will produce a series of unpredictable risks to add to an employment situation which is already unacceptably insecure. But staying out begins to look more and more like a policy of political cowardice with few real life economic advantages.' It is worth noting, however, that rank-and-file opinion is far more negative: one 1999 survey found 61 percent of union members opposed to joining the euro, only 23 percent in favour (Mullen and Burkitt 2003: 333); another found a slightly lower negative opinion, but still substantial and higher than among the population as a whole (Mulhearn 2004: 296).

In more recent years, a leftward switch in the leadership of two of the largest unions – Amicus in 2002 and TGWU in 2003, now both amalgamated to form Unite – has resulted in a more critical position on EU matters. In 2005 Congress rejected the Constitutional Treaty (already seemingly dead as a result of the French and Dutch votes) because it was seen as entrenching economic liberalisation; while in September 2007 the Congress voted in favour of a referendum on the Lisbon Reform Treaty, largely as a protest against the UK opt-out from the charter of fundamental rights (although a motion to campaign for a 'no' vote in a referendum was defeated).

In assessing the internal politics of British union positions towards European integration, two influences seem primarily important. One is what Rosamond (1993) terms 'sectoral pragmatism': unions have tended to reflect the economic interests of their core constituencies. Hence those organising primarily in the public sector have shown particular sensitivity to the negative implications of monetary union for public expenditure, and the impact of competition policy on 'services of general interest'. Conversely, unions organising in export-oriented sectors have been concerned that non-membership of the single currency has adversely affected competitiveness, particularly with the de facto devaluation of the euro against the pound sterling. But such material concerns have been refracted, and sometimes negated, by basic ideological positions, as Josselin (2001) has argued in her analysis of union policies in Britain, France and Germany, and Bieler (2006) has demonstrated in his more extensive comparative study (though he also provides much evidence to support

the 'sectoral pragmatism' perspective). In the UK, certainly, such positions can often shift almost overnight between left and right with a change of leadership in individual unions. Therefore, the argument by Strange (2002: 333) that there is now 'a clear and deepening consensus in favour of the EU among British unions' was somewhat premature. 'Euro-scepticism' has appeared to be regaining influence: even before the ECJ Viking and Laval judgments, the increasingly neoliberal stance of the Commission and the imposition of drastic austerity measures had begun to transform the terrain of European engagement. However, in the 2016 referendum the TUC, and most of its major affiliates, gave strong (though not necessarily active) support to 'Remain'; although some of the main white-collar unions in the public sector took a neutral stance. Only a few smaller unions, notably the RMT rail union, supported 'Brexit'.

4. British unions and the ETUC

Despite – or perhaps because of – the predominant scepticism or even hostility towards European integration, British unions played an important role in the consolidation of trade unionism at European level. The discussion below distinguishes three main phases. The first was the process which resulted in the creation of the ETUC and its opening to greater ideological diversity in the following year. The second covers the period up to the end of the 1980s when the TUC could be described as an 'awkward giant': the largest trade union confederation in western Europe, but often at odds with the next largest, the German DGB, and for much of the period attracting suspicion as being at best half-hearted towards the project of European integration. In the third phase it was accepted, and defined itself as a loyal member of the European trade union mainstream, a change reflected in the election of John Monks as ETUC general secretary in 2003.

4.1. Towards the ETUC

Dølvik and Visser (2001: 14) have argued that 'until well into the 1970s, international trade union activity was foreign policy, a residual activity in national union offices, far removed from everyday practice, conducted by second-echelon union officials and staff with linguistic and diplomatic skills in far-away offices'. This was certainly true of the TUC, but the position shifted with the debate about EEC accession, which made European affairs a subject of widespread concern in Britain.

The TUC played a key role in the developments which led to the creation of the ETUC. It was hostile, or at least sceptical, to what it saw as the integrationist aspirations of the ICFTU European Regional Organisation (ERO), including the free movement of labour. As Charles Geddes, a senior member of the General Council commented, 'my personal task as the TUC's representative on the ERO economic committee was to ensure that the wording of the reports and recommendations was in such terms that they could be swallowed without too much mental indigestion' (Beever 1960: 268). Suspicious of what they regarded as the growing influence of unions from the 'Six' within the ICFTU – from 1958 organised in the European Trade Union Secretariat (ETUS) – British union leaders largely initiated the creation in 1960 of a rival committee. They complained to the ICFTU that ERO 'was too closely aligned to the EC, and that European trade unionism was being redefined to mean

EC trade unionism' (Teague 1989: 31). The new committee in turn became ICFTU-EFTA in 1968 (Buschak 2003: 3; Strange 2007: 239). In the following year the ETUS was reconstituted as the European Confederation of Free Trade Unions in the European Community (ECFTUC).

When the UK, together with Denmark, Ireland and Norway (which eventually rejected EEC membership in a referendum), made its accession application in 1968, and particularly when negotiations opened in 1970, it was evident that the architecture of European trade unionism would have to change. The TUC helped establish a European Trade Union Liaison Committee intended to lead to 'a permanent European trade union body providing a channel for discussion and agreement on broad European questions', and chaired its first meeting in Brussels in July 1970 (General Council Report 1970: 356). After a second meeting a few months later, the committee appears to have lapsed, but discussion continued through more informal channels. In November 1971 an 'informal meeting of national centres' took place in Oslo, involving affiliates of both EFTA-TUC and ECFTUC. It was 'agreed that there was an urgent need for greater international trade union co-operation in Europe', but there were conflicting views on the form this should take, and a Working Party was created to address these.³ The TUC position was that 'any new European organisation should avoid constitutional links with the ICFTU, retaining freedom in regard to policies and membership'. The TUC was also anxious to ensure 'the flexible and economical use of staff and facilities'. Unlike many other participants, it argued that 'political considerations should not override practical considerations of trade union co-operation', and questioned whether 'the nominally federal character of the ECFTU was appropriate to an organisation that might consist of twenty or more national trade union bodies'. Voting rights and membership fees were among other problematic issues (General Council Report 1972: 188-9).

Though many of these issues were resolved in the following year, in August 1973 – only four months before the intended launch of the new organisation – the General Council still raised major concerns: 'that the staffing proposed by the secretariats of the EFTA-TUC and the ECFTUC for the new organisation was too ambitious..., that the role and functions of the new organisation were insufficiently defined..., that its benefit to working people in Britain was insufficiently clear though the cost to the TUC would substantially exceed current payments to the EFTA-TUC, and that the danger remained that membership would be limited on grounds not relevant to trade union interests' (General Council Report 1973: 199). Final decisions on a number of these issues had to await the founding congress of the ETUC in February 1973; others were resolved only later.

Many of the controversies set the TUC in opposition to the German DGB, by far the largest member of the ECFTUC. The first was the geographical scope of the new organisation. As is well known, the DGB argued for a body restricted to Member States of the enlarged EEC. Vetter, its president, wrote later (1983: 21-2) that the key purpose of the new body should be to influence EEC policies, and therefore restricting membership to EEC countries 'was a very clear and logical position'. For the TUC, by contrast, the new body should address broader European issues, and in particular should provide a counterweight to the growing power of multinational companies; this required a larger

3. This is presumably the same working group described by Debonne (1987: 38-43), comprising Heinz Oskar Vetter (DGB), Vic Feather (TUC), Bruno Storti (CISL), Thomas Nielsen (LO Denmark) and Georges Debonne (ABVV/FGTB). He also writes of informal meetings (that included Feather) taking place from 1970.

geographical scope. Implicit in this argument was also a concern that the new organisation should not be dominated by pro-integrationists. On this issue the TUC prevailed, to a great extent because no Nordic unions would join the new body unless all were admitted (Dølvik 1997: 137; Gorges 1996).

The *political* boundaries of membership were even more contentious, and linked to this question was the name of the new body and its relationship to the ICFTU. The TUC wished to establish an organisation open to all 'representative' unions and thus with no constitutional links to the international body; thus 'the name should avoid suggesting that formal adherence to the ICFTU might be a condition of affiliation' (General Council Report 1973: 201). According to Roberts and Liebhaberg (1976: 263), 'the dominant faction on the general council... was in favour of a rapprochement with the communist-led unions not only in Western, but also in Eastern Europe, as a means of strengthening the socialist forces in the capitalist countries of Europe. If this goal was to be achieved, it was necessary to detach the European trade unions from the restrictions which were imposed by their links with the existing world trade union organisations.' While this goal had some support, there was a wide spectrum of other positions. Some national centres wanted to confine membership to ICFTU affiliates. Others were willing to admit affiliates of the ex-Christian World Confederation of Labour (WCL) but not communists, and indeed the first steps towards such an outcome were taken in 1970 (Moreno 1991: 135-7). The DGB also supported this position, but resisted separation from the ICFTU. Again, the story is well known: the new ETUC was formally autonomous of the ICFTU, which abolished its ERO. The title 'free' was dropped; Jones, who was then chair of the TUC International Committee,⁴ recalled (1986: 267) his comment that the East German FDGB used the term in its own title. As a token gesture to the DGB, however, the word 'free' was included in the preamble to the constitution, which also recorded that the founding members belonged to the ICFTU. A year later, all main WCL affiliates in Europe were admitted, followed closely by the Italian CGIL; but other communist unions had to wait much longer, in the face of DGB resistance.

A third question, perhaps never fully resolved, concerned the authority and functions of the ETUC. According to Buschak (2003: 11-12), 'in reality the ETUC was anything but a federation, rather a hybrid between a letter box and an information office. It had no independent competences, nor were they wanted.... The ETUC member organisations were satisfied with an information point in Brussels.' This was hardly true of all affiliates, many of which advocated much stronger supranational capacities and the resources to match; but it accurately represents the position of the TUC, jealous to preserve its own autonomy.

This links closely to budgetary controversies. The TUC had some 10 million members, almost equal to the combined membership of the ECFTUC; but this was not matched by its financial resources. There were three reasons, which a comparison with the DGB may illustrate. First, most individual unions were poorly resourced. Whereas German membership subscriptions were typically a fixed proportion of members' income, commonly 1%, British unions normally charged a lump sum. Over time, subscription rates had failed to keep pace with prices and incomes, partly because of inter-union competition, and by 1970 they represented only about 0.4% of average earnings. Second, the same patterns applied to confederal contributions: German unions paid 12% of subscription income to the DGB,

4. Jones 'was a strong chairman' and almost certainly ensured that the TUC position on the key contentious issues was firmer than its secretariat wished (interview, John Monks, 25 April 2013).

whereas British unions paid a flat-rate sum per member which amounted to less than 2% of subscription income. Hence the DGB, with some 7 million members, had almost ten times the income of the TUC. Third, disparities were compounded by exchange rate instability. Because the ETUC, like the ICFTU, was based in Brussels, subscriptions were paid in Belgian francs (BEF). Until devaluation of the British pound (£) at the end of 1967, the exchange rate was 1:140, which then fell to 1:120. By the time the ETUC was formed, this had declined further to 1:100. As discussed in the next section, depreciation continued, to a rate of 1:60 at the end of 1976, and after intermittent recovery the pound fell even further. Over the same period, the Deutschmark actually appreciated against the BEF.

Not surprisingly, the TUC sought a budgetary regime which would reflect these disparities. Its initial proposal was that contributions to the ETUC should be based on affiliates' income, not membership (Vetter 1883: 33). Failing to achieve this objective, it was anxious to limit the resources of the new body. In the discussions in November 1972, a majority of unions had proposed an affiliation fee of BEF 700 per thousand members. 'The General Council representative made it clear that they could not contemplate this figure, bearing in mind that the present cost of the EFTA-TUC and the ECFTUC taken together would be met by a fee of approximately BEF 450 per thousand members.' Devaluation had added substantially to the sums required of the TUC for international purposes. Eventually it was agreed to recommend an initial fee of BEF 550, to be reviewed in the first year (General Council Report 1973: 202). Hence the financial issue was resolved, but only temporarily.

One may note one of the visible reflections of financial constraints. Anyone attending the four-yearly ETUC congresses will be struck by the contrast between the dozen or so delegates from the TUC and the massive delegations – two or three hundred – from its German and Italian counterparts. The British view is that the TUC should send the numbers required for the relevant purposes and that a larger contingent would be a waste of resources. In practical terms this is surely true, but the symbolism may not have enhanced British influence.

4.2. The ambivalent role of an awkward giant

In February 1973, the creation of the ETUC was hardly likely to have been a central concern for British trade unions. For two years, the TUC had been struggling to maintain a united front to resist the Industrial Relations Act introduced by the Heath government in 1971. Unions then had to respond to the statutory pay freeze which the government imposed in November 1972. Accession to the EEC in January 1973 was primarily an occasion to reiterate TUC opposition, since the Congress decision the previous autumn (as described above) rejected membership in principle and not only in detail.

The first issue which set the TUC at odds with all other members of the new ETUC was participation in EEC consultative bodies. According to Teague (1989: 32), in 1972 'Feather had assured the Social Affairs Commissioner that the TUC would take up its seats on the Economic and Social Committee as soon as possible'. But in the light of the anti-EEC resolution adopted in September 1972, the General Council refused to submit nominations. The result was that the voting strength of the trade union side on ECOSOC was less than that of the employers. Partly to encourage a change in the TUC position, Feather was elected as first president of the ETUC, despite the widespread expectation that the post would be offered to Nielsen of LO Denmark (Moreno and Gabaglio 2006: 77; Roberts and Liebhaberg 1976:

263-4). Before the 1973 Congress vote against participating in EEC institutions, Feather 'had apparently given his continental colleagues the impression that he would be able to finesse a vote in favour of participation' (<http://aad.archives.gov/aad/createpdf?rid=74078&dt=2472&dl=1345>); after the vote he had little room for manoeuvre, and reasserted the dominant TUC view firmly. As Vetter later commented laconically (1983: 24), 'it is undoubtedly a British speciality to make forceful speeches of principled opposition to something precisely when one wants to turn in a different direction'. Feather retired as TUC General Secretary at the 1973 Congress, though he remained ETUC president until its second congress in May 1974; and before the referendum he agreed to chair a pro-EEC group, the Trade Union Alliance for Europe. He was succeeded as ETUC president by Vetter, DGB president from 1969 to 1982, a hard-line anti-communist and a strong supporter of the EEC who reportedly stood in order to prevent the election of the more left-wing Debonne (*Der Spiegel*, 3 June 1974). Initially, TUC support inclined to Debonne, but eventually it backed Vetter; this may well have been part of a deal with the DGB when Feather was elected president (interview, Tom Jenkins, 6 May 2013). Vetter's politics must have set him at odds with the two leading British trade unionists of the 1970s, Jack Jones of the TGWU and Hugh Scanlon of the Engineers.

In April 1973, the ETUC formally asked the TUC to reconsider its boycott, but the General Council decided to refer the question to Congress in September, which supported the policy by a relatively narrow majority. As noted above, the TUC agreed to participate fully in the EEC institutions immediately after the referendum. Partly to demonstrate its commitment to European trade union cooperation, the TUC agreed to host the ETUC congress in London in April 1976. Here, there were frictions over the presidency: the TUC argued that the position should rotate, but Vetter insisted on standing for re-election (Roberts and Liebhaber 1976: 266-7), arguing that this was necessary to ensure continuity when the secretariat was changing (General Council Report 1976: 230). There were also underlying differences on economic policy: the TUC entered the ETUC with 'a whole shopping list of policy goals, the central focus being unemployment'. But while it advocated expansionary macroeconomic policies, the DGB gave higher priority to avoiding inflation (Dorfman 1977: 252-4). The TUC, while supporting the reduction of working time (indeed in 1976 it pressed the ETUC to adopt the goal of a standard 35-hour week), objected to specific measures such as strict limits on overtime (General Council Report 1979: 220). The TUC felt that the initial ETUC general secretary, Theo Rasschaert (previously secretary of the ECFTUC) was too subservient to the policy priorities of the Commission and insufficiently assertive on expansionary economic policy. Reportedly, he was regarded as 'Vetter's boy' (<http://aad.archives.gov/aad/createpdf?rid=224185&dt=2082&dl=1345>) and the TUC played a key role in his replacement by Mathias Hinterscheid in 1976 (Dorfman 1979: 139).

Finances were a continuing source of tension. In March 1974 the ETUC proposed raising affiliation fees from BEF 550 to 650 per thousand members. The TUC responded that no adequate case had been made for such an increase, and a decision was deferred. Subsequently the General Council 'considered information not previously available and took the view that a modest increase in fees could perhaps be justified', while arguing against an increase in the number of senior staff and the number of working languages. A rate of BEF 600 was then approved, subject to further review (General Council Report 1974: 176). Again in December 1974, the TUC argued that the budget proposals for 1975 were insufficiently detailed, and it was eventually agreed to maintain fees at the existing rate. Exactly the same issue recurred the following year, when the secretariat proposed a 25% increase in fees.

With the continuing depreciation of sterling, the TUC in 1976 was spending over a third of its total membership income on overseas affiliation fees, and it insisted that the proposals were 'not acceptable, and the aim should be for stability in the rate of affiliation fees, which might involve economies'. Similar problems of devaluation also affected unions in Italy, Ireland and Iceland, and a compromise was reached that these affiliates should continue to pay the existing rates, while the others would pay BEF 1000 per thousand members (General Council Report 1977: 164-5). Discussions continued, with the Scandinavian unions suggesting that payments be based on 1973 exchange rates; eventually it was agreed to maintain the two-tier system. The TUC finally agreed to pay a rate of BEF 750, while the higher rate was increased to BEF 1134.

In 1979 the proposal to link affiliation fees to the income of national confederations was again discussed. It was noted that LO Sweden paid less than a quarter of 1% of its income to the ETUC, the TUC over 5% and the Irish Congress of Trade Unions over 11%. The wealthier affiliates responded that they undertook functions which the poorer ones did not. Subsequently the secretariat suggested that contributions should reflect exchange rate changes since 1978, a proposal which the TUC endorsed but the DGB objected (General Council Report 1979: 213). Similar disagreements recurred the following year, reinforced by suggestions of a higher increase for affiliates paying the lower subscription rate; the compromise eventually agreed provided for a flat-rate increase in fees (General Council Report 1980: 179-80). In 1981, when the value of the pound had temporarily recovered somewhat, the TUC accepted another flat-rate increase. Within the General Council there were suggestions 'that the influence of the TUC in the ETUC had been weakened because of its relatively low rate of payments and that it was necessary to accept the financial obligations which came with membership'; but there was also a call for a review to 'ensure that the ETUC worked with maximum efficiency', with a detailed assessment of 'areas for possible savings and for improving services to affiliates' (General Council Report 1981: 207). In 1982 the TUC approved a proposal that the following year's fees should be set at existing exchange rates. In 1985 the ETUC secretariat again proposed moving to a single rate of fees; the TUC resisted, but accepted a larger than average increase since 'it was desirable in the interests of maintaining their influence to bring TUC contributions into line gradually with those of other major ETUC affiliates' (General Council Report 1986: 212). However, in December 1986 the TUC was isolated when it voted to oppose a supplementary levy to meet a shortfall in the ETUC budget.

As noted above, the TUC was a strong supporter of an ETUC that would be 'as broadly representative of European trade union interests as possible'; thus it endorsed the admission of WCL affiliates and also favoured the acceptance of ex-communist unions. It pressed strongly for a speedy approval of the CGIL application, which was agreed (against strong resistance) in July 1974 (General Council Report 1974: 174, 178-9). Congress in 1974 also approved a motion calling for 'cooperation with all European trade unions as a matter of priority', which supporters made clear meant developing 'fraternal relations' between ICFTU and WFTU affiliates. When the CGT made an informal approach regarding affiliation at the end of 1974, the TUC was favourable but recognised that there was no prospect of acceptance, particularly since the CGT insisted that (unlike CGIL) it would remain a member of WFTU; but British unions continued to give 'general support... on the principal ground that the ETUC should strive to achieve comprehensive membership and a fully representative character' (General Council Report 1979: 214).

By 1980, CC.OO and CGTP had joined the list of applicants; the TUC repeated 'that the ETUC should aim at accepting into membership all representative, independent

national centres in Western Europe which accepted its procedures and the broad lines of its policies' (General Council Report 1980: 181). When it came to a formal vote on the CGT, the TUC was completely isolated, being alone in voting for immediate approval (Moreno 1991: 177). 'We will persevere in our attempts to obtain that all-embracing body for which the TUC has pressed over a long period,' the chair of the international committee reported to Congress. He repeated these remarks the following year, when the CC.OO application had been deferred: 'we could be stronger because there are still some representative organisations not in the ETUC. We need them in the ETUC and they need us'. A delegate asked: 'how can the European TUC be effective if it denies membership to important representative, established trade union centres, particularly when it is abundantly clear that the opposition is based on political prejudice and distortion that we would not tolerate from the employers?' In December 1982, TUC representatives insisted that 'they were more than ever convinced of the need to have the CC.OO in membership in order to strengthen the ETUC and to consolidate democratic forces in Spain' (General Council Report 1983: 182-3). At the following Congress, a speaker declared it 'a scandal that the largest and most representative centres in France, Spain and Portugal are excluded from the ETUC,' accusing the DGB of black-mail. In 1984, a motion at Congress called for 'close links with all major international trade union centres, regardless of affiliation, through regular formal meetings and exchanges; and strengthening links with those major national trade union centres seeking affiliation to the ETUC but currently denied the right to do so'. The General Council successfully asked for this to be remitted, primarily because it could be read as a call for formal contacts with WFTU, at a time when the repression of Polish Solidarność was sharpening divisions. But there was doubtless a sense that the prospects of quiet diplomacy had increased when Ernst Breit replaced Vetter as DGB president; and indeed, the ETUC congress in 1985 adopted a compromise resolution drafted by the TUC. The political balance within the TUC had also changed, as the Engineers swung to the right, and in 1986 it reaffirmed that it 'would continue to work for enlargement of the ETUC' but 'would not take unilateral action which would hamper progress' (General Council Report 1986: 212). A similar motion in 1987 to that of 1984 was accepted by the General Council 'with reservations'.

Despite strong political commitments, British trade unionism has always been marked by pragmatism. As Jones declared at the opening congress of the ETUC, the new body should be judged by the impact of its work on the shop floor, and should engage in practical work without preconceived notions. The TUC 'was shocked by the lack of co-ordination among the different national trade unions at the European level', and pressed for more effective articulation between the confederal and sectoral structures (Teague 1989: 34). It opposed the initial policy that recognised Industrial Committees should be independent of their international parent organisations, and won support for a more flexible approach (General Council Report 1978: 226-8). It also pressed for more effective coordination of the views of national affiliates before meetings of the ETUC executive. Thus 'the TUC brought a new and distinct style to the workings of European trade unionism' (Teague 1989: 34-5). At the same time, its engagement with the ETUC enhanced its own status, offering 'a new organizational role and political profile' (MacShane 1991: 286). Notably, Lea was the initial chair of the ETUC Economic Committee, providing an important policy link between the ETUC and its British affiliate (interview, Peter Coldrick, 26 March 2013). British unions also played an active role in the Industrial Committees, most notably the European Metalworkers' Federation: Scanlon was elected its president in 1974, declaring that 'his acceptance illustrated the deep internationalism of metalworkers in Great Britain, having nothing

in common with the strictly commercial objectives of the EEC'. He was succeeded in the position by Terry Duffy and Bill Jordan, who followed him as leaders of the Engineering Union, meaning an uninterrupted series of British presidents until 1995. More generally, most large UK unions have tended to pursue a 'twin track' approach, addressing the EC institutions while also building cross-national union links at sectoral level (Wendon 1994).

4.3. Part of the mainstream

The TUC Congress of 1988 is conventionally regarded as a turning point, with the invitation to Delors to address the delegates, his carefully crafted speech which insisted that 'there is a vital influential role for the TUC in the European Community', and the response by Ron Todd, leader of the TGWU and chair of the international committee, that 'the only card game in town at the moment is in a town called Brussels, and it is a game of poker where we have got to learn the rules and learn them fast'. In fact, as suggested earlier, the transformation was rather less abrupt. If in theory the resolutions of 1981 and 1983 calling for withdrawal from the EEC were still official policy, in practice they had been a dead letter since Thatcher's re-election in the latter year: the secretariat had been systematically cultivating its European involvement. Yet clearly 1988 had symbolic importance for trade unionists elsewhere in Europe. Also noteworthy was that the speech that followed Delors' was by Breit, in his role as ETUC president – the first time that an ETUC official was invited to address Congress. This signalled an era 'of active engagement – with the EC political institutions, with the ETUC, and with the TUC's union counterparts across Europe' (Mitchell 2012: 31).

Not that all previous tensions were overcome. The TUC continued to press for the admission into ETUC membership of 'all representative national trade union centres wishing to join and ready to abide by ETUC rules' and sought to win support in a series of bilateral meetings with other affiliates, including a visit to both UGT and CC.OO (General Council Report 1989: 164). This may have helped contribute to the other Spanish unions ending their resistance to the admission of CC.OO, which was approved in December 1990. In 1994 the TUC 'strongly supported' a renewed application by the CGTP, which was accepted a year later. With the admission of the CGT in 1999, a long-running source of conflict was finally closed.

At least publicly, financial contributions to the ETUC were no longer an issue – though even after the relative stabilisation of the value of sterling, international affiliation continued to represent over 10% of TUC income from its own affiliates. Thus when the ETUC sold its existing headquarters building in order to move into the new International Trade Union House, it was 'decided that the financial position of the TUC would not permit the General Council to allocate new resources from the proceeds from the sale of their holding in the existing building' (General Council Report 1993: 108). The TUC approved the (financially demanding) organisational reforms proposed in the Stekelenburg report in 1990 and adopted at the 1991 congress, aimed at enhancing the authority and coordinating role of the ETUC. The General Council 'also supported proposals to strengthen the role of the General Secretary, to introduce a formal committee structure to improve the preparation of policies, to strengthen the staff resources of the ETUC, and to ensure that at least one senior staff member was a woman' (General Council Report 1991: 129). This still left important space for disagreement over the precise relationship between the Confederation and its affiliates; the TUC in particular (together with the Nordic unions), was sceptical of

the 'supranationalist vision' of some of its counterparts in other countries, notably the Italians (Martin and Ross 1999: 328).

More immediately, the choice of general secretary to follow Mathias Hinterscheid provoked serious friction. The TUC believed that there was broad consensus on the choice of Johan van Rens from the Dutch FNV; but the DGB decided to support Emilio Gabaglio and seems to have engaged in a degree of arm-twisting to win over support. 'As the British and Dutch unions felt trapped, this caused tension within the ETUC, despite German attempts at damage repair by offering Norman Willis (TUC) the somewhat ceremonial post as ETUC president' (Dølvik 1997: 162-3). According to Moreno (1999: 257), 'the British unions' preference for van Rens was only natural, not only because his position on Europe – more cautious than that of the Italians – was similar to theirs, but also and in particular because it fitted in better with their own organisational structure. They preferred a more "technical" secretariat that would be accountable to a strong presidency.' This is not altogether plausible, not least because the TUC possesses a strong secretariat and a purely nominal presidency, rotating annually. Nor does it seem reasonable to describe the FNV as 'cautious' about strong ETUC leadership (Stekelenburg, like van Rens, was an FNV official). It seems more likely that having made an apparent deal over the new general secretary, the TUC was simply unwilling to change its position. In any event, Willis (who held the presidency for only two years until his retirement) developed a close working relationship with Gabaglio, who was invited to address Congress in 1991 and again in a number of subsequent years.

Another contentious issue was the conduct of peak-level negotiations within the framework of the October 1991 social partners' agreement and the Maastricht social protocol. Lea, as assistant general secretary, played a pivotal role in the early stages of the European social dialogue from the mid-1980s (Didry and Mias 2005: 234-8) and was TUC representative on the bipartite Social Dialogue Ad Hoc Group which helped draft the agreement; he 'saw the introduction of European negotiations as a way to circumvent the veto policies of the British government, forge a stronger role for the TUC and force the CBI into negotiating relations at home, thereby also counteracting the drive towards decentralisation of bargaining and de-recognition of unions at home' (Dølvik 1997: 210). However, the TUC conception of peak-level bargaining was shaped by the absence of analogous procedures in Britain (indeed the virtual demise of even sectoral collective bargaining), by the fact that collective agreements had no legally binding status in the UK, and by the scepticism of some influential affiliates towards the whole idea of social dialogue. In consequence, its representatives in the ETUC debates in 1992 insisted that objectives should not be overambitious (Dølvik 1997: 246, 252). In particular, more effective articulation between national, sectoral and confederal structures was essential in order to develop coherent European objectives; only then would the goal of European collective bargaining be realistic (Dølvik 1997: 270-1).

The construction of a European bargaining regime involved complex divisions within the ETUC over the balance between national and supranational regulation, sectoral and cross-sectoral initiative, and collective agreement and legislation. The ETUC secretariat was pressing ambitious proposals, and Dølvik (1997: 282-4) describes how Lea threatened to walk out of discussions. A compromise was eventually reached in March 1993, but the TUC role had involved 'a difficult balancing act' between European concepts and British industrial relations traditions (Dølvik 1997: 299).

In the approach to '1992', Congress in 1989 adopted a resolution calling on the TUC to explore ways of strengthening its services to affiliates on European issues, including the creation of a European Section, detailed information systems, education and training on

European issues and the appointment of a European Officer in Brussels. In response, in 1991 the TUC international department was renamed the European Union and International Relations Department, and a separate Committee on European Strategy was established. The TUC also created a network of '1992 Contact Points' (later renamed Network Europe Contact Points) and launched a series of training and information programmes. A Congress resolution in 1992 agreed to 'push European Community issues towards the top of TUC priorities and match that commitment with appropriate resources', and reiterated the proposal for a Brussels office. This was done the following year. Two affiliates, the GMB general union and the GPMU print union, also opened a Brussels office. As part of the restructuring of the TUC in 1994, most standing committees, including that for European Strategy, were abolished (Heery 1998) and a 'Europe Monitoring Group' was established.

As Rosamond has commented (1998: 131), 'the TUC's resources of information, knowledge and research capacity have enabled the General Council to accumulate "European" expertise over time [and] allowed the TUC's leadership to define the nature of the European environment within which unions operate and to act as the main agenda setter within the union movement on questions of European integration'. The more focused role of the TUC at European level brought enhanced authority and influence, and this was clearly demonstrated with the succession to Gabaglio in 2003. Gabaglio himself commented laconically (2010: 148-9) that a decision was taken that the new general secretary should be a national union leader. This obviously made sense: the ETUC general secretary must manage an elaborate apparatus, maintain tight financial discipline and reconcile the complex geopolitical rivalries and differences of the affiliates; top leadership at national level tests and also develops capacities in all these respects. However, in the international trade union world it is normal first to decide on preferred candidates for top positions and then to define the criteria for selection. In this case, it seems the two names in the frame were Monks and Nicole Notat (until 2002 head of the CFDT, and who decided not to stand). The election of Monks was particularly significant because of the traditional implicit principle that the secretaries of the international and European trade union bodies should not come from their largest affiliates. However, this principle was already breached in 1995 when Bill Jordan was elected ICFTU general secretary, to be followed by Guy Ryder in 2002. As Brendan Barber, who succeeded Monks as TUC general secretary, quipped at the ITUC founding congress, 'there is one area where Britain excels, and that is the export of trade unionists'.

In the more recent period, two issues deserve note. The first was the debate over the Constitutional Treaty. In the initial discussions in the Steering Committee in July 2004, Brendan Barber 'described the mood in Great Britain as anti-Constitution. For trade unions the situation was specifically difficult because the UK government's negative stance... on the social dimension in general and the Charter of Fundamental Rights in particular had led to real anger among trade unions.' In September, Owen Tudor again stressed the degree of scepticism in Britain. Following the rejection of the Constitutional Treaty by the French and Dutch voters, Barber reiterated that 'the TUC had not taken a position on the Constitution primarily because of disillusion with the UK government's opposition to Social Europe' (Executive Committee 14-15 June 2005).

A second key issue was the TUC approach to the free movement of labour after EU enlargement in 2004. Unlike the majority of old Member States, the UK imposed no transitional restrictions on workers from the accession countries. The TUC, and most of its affiliates, strongly supported immediate free movement, fearing that migrant workers would otherwise be forced to take on irregular work (Clark and Hardy 2011: 4). The government

did impose restrictions on the entry of workers from Bulgaria and Romania after 2007, but this was condemned by the TUC, which pressed for a relaxation of the rules. British unions were notable for their efforts to represent the large, mainly Polish, migrant workforce, developing close relationships with their counterparts in the countries of origin (Gumbrell-McCormick and Hyman 2013).

This impressively solidary position was seemingly negated by the high-profile unofficial strike by British construction workers at the Lindsey oil refinery in 2009, against the refusal by an Italian contractor to employ local workers and its use of Italian and Portuguese posted workers on inferior wages and conditions. This was widely depicted as a xenophobic incident, not least by the Italian unions (Meardi 2012: 14-6). However, the strike was in effect a (largely successful) effort to defend collectively agreed conditions against attempts by a foreign service provider to undercut these (Barnard 2009); the issues thus reflected broader ETUC concerns that free movement without adequate social protections could result in social dumping. To counter misrepresentations, the Unite union issued a statement, with versions in French, German, Italian and Spanish: 'this dispute is not about giving one nationality precedence over another in applying for jobs in the UK. In fact it is precisely the opposite. It is about giving all nationalities the same opportunity and ensuring that all nationalities benefit from the same terms and conditions, won through the efforts of trade unionists, once in employment in this country.' Three ETUFs - the EFBWW, EMCEF and EMF - issued a joint statement describing the dispute as a 'British Laval', and the ETUC Steering committee adopted a resolution presenting this as a demonstration to create a 'level playing field' to regulate free movement. Almost certainly, the strong relationships which had developed between British unions and their European organisations enabled a potentially divisive conflict to be shaped along solidaristic lines. Whether or not 'Brexit' actually materialises, British unions may be expected to remain major players on the broader terrain of European trade unionism.

5. Conclusion

The account presented in this chapter could be viewed as a paradox: for much of the post-war period, British trade unionism was marked by a powerful (though certainly not unanimous) hostility to the project of European integration. This contrasted sharply with the posture of the initial ETUC affiliates from the countries of the original EEC. Yet British unions played a decisive role in shaping the new ETUC, often against the preferences of its other main founders.

The anti-EEC posture was never embraced by the TUC secretariat, and the dominant view of affiliates displayed a process of pragmatic adaptation to the reality of EU membership and the potential gains from EU regulation. With the loss of collective bargaining strength from the end of the 1970s and the hostility to trade unionism displayed by the Thatcher/Major governments between 1979 and 1997, but also the Blair/Brown governments which followed, British workers could be seen to benefit from the 'social dimension' that was particularly apparent in the Delors years. While much of the social legislation of the EU constituted a 'lowest common denominator' and provided little added value for most ETUC affiliates in western Europe, for unions in Britain – where statutory employee rights were traditionally extremely limited – the advantages in hard times were manifest. Hence the Working Time Directive of 1993 – bitterly opposed by the UK government, which

obtained the individual ‘opt-out’ from the 48-hour ceiling - provided the first universal regulation of working hours in the country. The European Works Council Directive of 1994 and the Information and Consultation Directive of 2002 both represented radical innovations in a country with no tradition of comprehensive employee representation machinery. In the past, when union faith in the virtues of free collective bargaining was still undiminished, such legislation would have been viewed with suspicion, if not hostility; now it was welcome.

In Britain there was a very different trade union culture from that of most other ETUC affiliates. As several of those involved in the process explained, British unions were not too worried about the textual detail of ETUC policies: they were more concerned with the practical implications. Some of the debates within the ETUC seemed arcane. There was a slow learning process but one in which mutual understanding increased on all sides.

As indicated above, for many years the TUC seemed something of an outsider in the ETUC, but this changed radically. ‘I can’t remember, when I became TUC General Secretary in 1993, any significant arguments with the ETUC’, said John Monks (interview, 25 April 2013): ‘We were the loyal of the loyal, we gave the general secretary the benefit of nearly all doubts’. The TUC became one of the most involved and supportive ETUC affiliates.

Despite their overarching pragmatism, British unions have always seen European organisation as an expression of the principle of solidarity. To an important extent, the early insistence of leaders like Jack Jones on the most encompassing scope possible of the new body was a reflection of this principle. As the current head of international and European affairs expressed it (interview, Owen Tudor, 2 May 2013), ‘we have never seen the ETUC as a channel for solely national interests being represented.... I think our approach to the ETUC is not transactional, we see it as being we are part of a collective organisation and therefore need to contribute to it.... Currently in the ETUC we’re seen as being ultra-loyal to the leadership, and we keep trying to convince our colleagues in Europe that we’re not being ultra-loyal to the leadership of the ETUC, we’re being ultra-loyal to the ETUC itself... I think the general British trade union view of the European Trade Union Confederation is that it is an institutional representation of the concept of worker solidarity, or union solidarity.’

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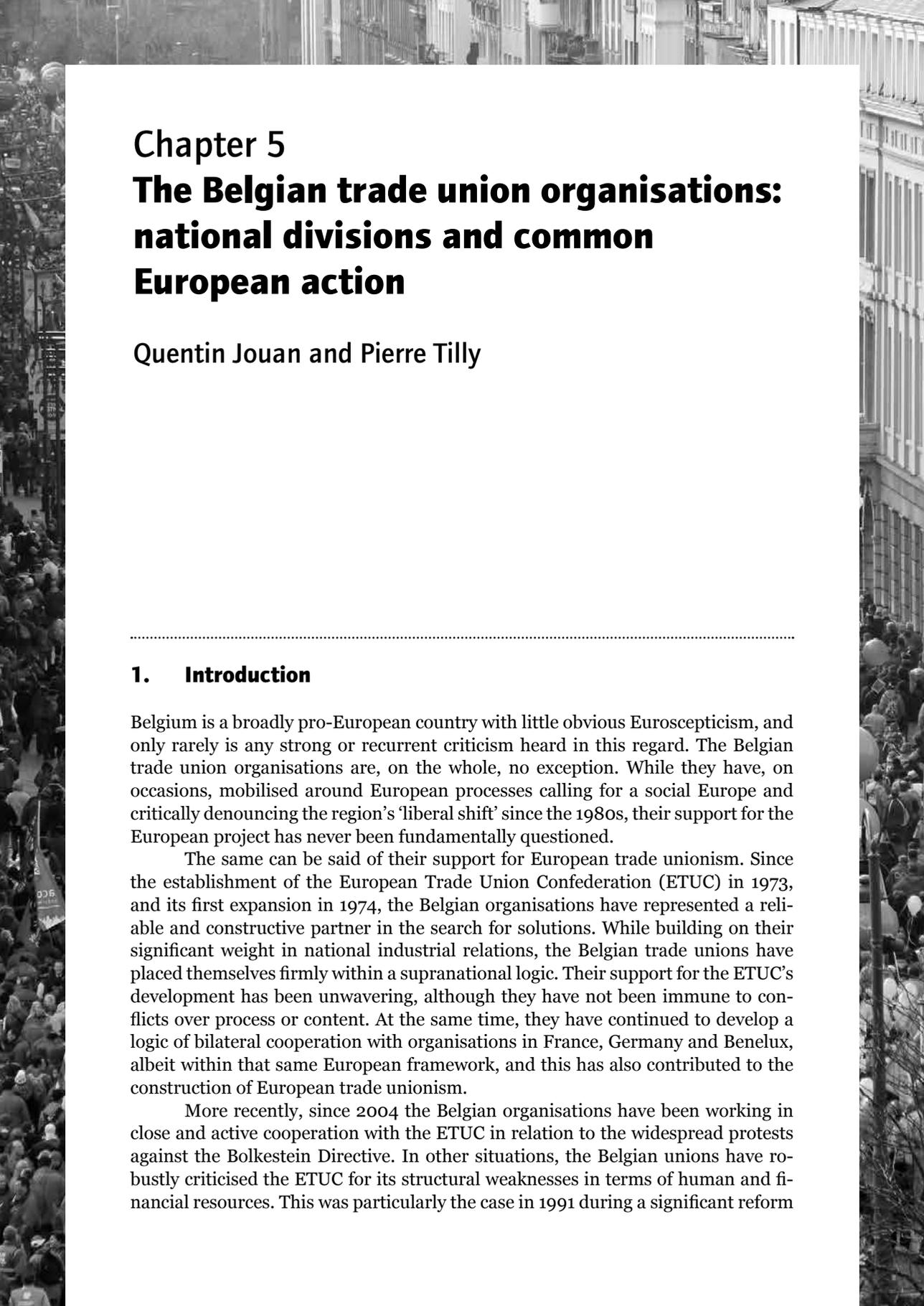
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Chapter 5

The Belgian trade union organisations: national divisions and common European action

Quentin Jouan and Pierre Tilly

1. Introduction

Belgium is a broadly pro-European country with little obvious Euroscepticism, and only rarely is any strong or recurrent criticism heard in this regard. The Belgian trade union organisations are, on the whole, no exception. While they have, on occasions, mobilised around European processes calling for a social Europe and critically denouncing the region's 'liberal shift' since the 1980s, their support for the European project has never been fundamentally questioned.

The same can be said of their support for European trade unionism. Since the establishment of the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) in 1973, and its first expansion in 1974, the Belgian organisations have represented a reliable and constructive partner in the search for solutions. While building on their significant weight in national industrial relations, the Belgian trade unions have placed themselves firmly within a supranational logic. Their support for the ETUC's development has been unwavering, although they have not been immune to conflicts over process or content. At the same time, they have continued to develop a logic of bilateral cooperation with organisations in France, Germany and Benelux, albeit within that same European framework, and this has also contributed to the construction of European trade unionism.

More recently, since 2004 the Belgian organisations have been working in close and active cooperation with the ETUC in relation to the widespread protests against the Bolkestein Directive. In other situations, the Belgian unions have robustly criticised the ETUC for its structural weaknesses in terms of human and financial resources. This was particularly the case in 1991 during a significant reform

of the organisation, as will be seen later in this chapter. Overwhelmingly clear, however, is the important role that a number of advantages have enabled the Belgian unions to play, both now and in the past. This will be the first point to be developed in more detail (Section 2). We then continue chronologically, highlighting the existence of two broad periods, and analyse how the Belgian unions welcomed, supported and accompanied the ETUC's first steps, despite a context of severe inter-organisational tensions at national level. A third point will briefly consider some of what we consider to be the most emblematic issues, and which are revealing of the relationship between Belgian trade unionism and Europe generally (including European trade unionism). The cases of *Solidarność* in the early 1980s, the Renault Vilvoorde affair of 1996, the Doorn group and, more recently, the Bolkestein Directive will all be considered. Finally, the Belgian trade unions' position with regard to the 2007 crisis, its consequences and remedies will draw this overview of a rich and eventful history to a close. This common history has been woven, not without conflicts, by drawing together several major threads that unite the Belgian trade unions around the European project. This includes their close cooperation at the European level despite numerous differences nationally.

2. Strengths and assets at the heart of Europe

Located at the heart of Europe, physically close to the structures of European trade unionism, this central position within the European family gives the Belgian organisations a number of advantages. In no particular order for the moment, we can mention such factors as geographical proximity, linguistic knowledge (a number of the leaders speak both French and English, two active languages of the European Union) and the presence of numerous longstanding immigrant communities in the country (Italians, Spaniards, Portuguese, Polish, Greeks and so on). This last point encourages a more subtle and nuanced consideration of what is a fundamental and underlying issue, namely European cultural diversity. Immigrant activists now play a significant role in the Belgian trade union movement, enabling structural relationships to be forged with organisations in their countries of origin and thus contributing to the construction of a European trade unionism on a social level. Specific structures devoted to immigration-related issues began to take shape both within the *Fédération générale des travailleurs de Belgique* (General Federation of Belgian Workers/FGTB) and the *Confédération générale des syndicats chrétiens* (General Confederation of Christian Unions/CSC) from the 1960s on, and these contributed to this dynamic and laid the basis for the participation of representatives from these communities in the decision-making processes.

As with member states politically and institutionally, the Belgian trade unions have shown the important role that 'small' and 'medium' entities can play in the process of European integration.¹ Insofar as the different actions and protests of the European social movement often start in the Belgian and European capital, the FGTB and the CSC are often at the forefront of organising such European demonstrations and themselves mobilising around

1. While it should be recalled that the notion of 'small state' does not exist in law, we would mention the fact that Jean-Claude Juncker, then Prime Minister of Luxembourg, emphasised, somewhat wryly, in an interview with the Belgian newspaper *La Libre Belgique* on 12 December 2001: 'There are only two large countries in the Union: Great Britain and the Grand Duchy. The others have taken the linguistic precaution of not insisting on their size.'

the same issues. This mobilisation, which comes almost naturally at the European level, sometimes results in a certain dissatisfaction regarding the financial and human investment it requires.²

One of the strengths of Belgian trade unionism lies in the country's high unionisation rate, a knock-on effect from the Nordic countries,³ and on a heavily institutionalised and composite mass unionism (Pigenet *et al.* 2005: 169). One feature common to all Belgian organisations is the existence of a long tradition of trade union pluralism within a political system defined since the 1970s as 'polarised multipartism' (Sartori 1976). The Belgian trade union world is divided by deep ideological differences. There are three cross-sectoral labour bodies in Belgium: the FGTB, the CSC and the *Confédération générale des syndicats libéraux de Belgique* (General Confederation of Free Belgian Unions/CGSLB).⁴ They are based in the north and south of the country, without any real national convergence and they represent different forms of unionism, subject to strong ideological influence. They are in many ways reminiscent of the differences that exist between the trade union worlds of northern and southern Europe. Unions in the Walloon region, in the south of the country, for example, have a tradition of protest in which the number of demonstrators is a key factor in the symbolic success of the action. This is generally associated with unions in the Latin countries and is less widespread in the countries of northern Europe.

The divisions between the Belgian unions are thus deep and are reflected particularly in their different ways of pursuing economic and social policies on employment or regional development, for example, and in the need to cooperate (or not) with the employers and government of the day.

In the south of the country, the dominant historical trait is the long presence of a primarily socialist and anti-establishment union movement that finds its references in the union culture of southern Europe. The situation is quite different in the north of the country, in Flanders, where a more 'proactive' and 'cooperative' form of Christian unionism, more akin to northern Europe, predominates. From this perspective, Christian unionism is closer to the German system, which prioritises cooperation between the social partners and a search for compromise, while not, however, ruling out confrontation (Rehfeldt 2005). These broad trends do not prevent the unions from continuing as national and unitary organisations, with regional wings. This is all the more important given that many issues continue to be dealt with at the federal level (labour law, collective bargaining agreements, social security, for example) and are thus negotiated nationally. The continued existence of national organisations does not, however, negate the existence of tensions between the Walloons and the Flemish, and this was particularly the case during the 1970s.

In general terms, Christian unionism emerged as the main force in the country at the end of the 1950s and was able to rely on the indisputable support of the Christian workers' movement and its youth and women's organisations, along with the Christian mutual societies, all united under a single umbrella (Mampuy 1994: 317 ff). This created a unique situation given that the Christian unions were disappearing in neighbouring countries, such as Germany from 1933 on and the Netherlands in 1981 (Goddeeris 2010: 243). They have,

2. Interview with Thierry Dock (CSC), Brussels, 23 September 2013.

3. For the latest figures, see the OECD's statistics. http://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=UN_DEN&Lang=fr; site visited 9 February 2015.

4. For more information on this latter, which is less well known as it is in a minority in the Belgian union environment, see Faniel and Vandaele (2011).

however, continued to exist in Italy, France, Switzerland and Austria, in these cases not as autonomous organisations but rather as stakeholders in a wider union movement (Pasture 1999: 410).

The socialist-inspired union trend, fundamentally reformist in nature, became established at the end of the nineteenth century within the *Parti Ouvrier Belge* (Belgian Workers Party).⁵ The FGTB emerged in its current form in April 1945 following a merger between various tendencies, resulting in a split with its highly powerful communist wing and closer ties with the Socialist Party post-Second World War. This created tensions with the wing embodied by André Renard, which wanted a union independent from its sister party (Tilly 2005). The FGTB has a longstanding relationship with the French unions, facilitated by a common language and the similarities in their union cultures. This is also the case with the Italian unions, however, particularly CGIL and UIL. A founding member of the ETUC in 1973, the FGTB has engaged in a significant amount of international action since the 1950s, particularly via European integration and the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) more broadly.

As for the free union movement, although established in 1899 at Gand some years after the *Parti Ouvrier Libéral* (Liberal Workers Party) was formed, it has long been the ‘Tom Thumb’ of Belgian unions, its difference marked by its desire to defend a programme of class cooperation or even worker participation in company profits. It is not insignificant, however, and stands as an exception among the different countries studied as there is no such powerful liberal trend in either the Netherlands or Luxembourg, to name two of the countries closest to Belgium.

The dominance of Christian unionism in Belgium, in terms of paid up members, was real and guaranteed during the 1960s and can be explained by structural factors that enabled it to ensure its supremacy, such as the Walloon Region’s industrial decline during the 1960s, structural changes in employment that led to an expansion of the service sector, the development of a non-profit sector in which Christian unionism had a strong presence and a unionisation rate higher in Flanders than in Wallonia (Van Kerkhoven 1986). Belgian unionism is also highly institutionalised, being closely linked to the country’s socio-economic administration. Due to its institutional recognition, which has in particular enabled it to play a central role in the administration of unemployment benefits, it has been able to develop a wide range of services for its members and has thus been able to draw on broad representation across companies and sectors.

Finally, we need to seek an explanation for the strength of the Belgian unions (along with the Nordic countries) in Europe, in terms of membership and rate of coverage of collective bargaining agreements. Two important dimensions need to be considered. First, its grassroots organising must be mentioned, thanks to a clear and guaranteed presence on the ground (Van Gyes 2009: 52). Second, its historical roots, which have enabled it to play the role of counterbalance in an original way that combines political mobilisation and, it may be, strike action with efforts aimed at consulting with other actors due to the Belgians’ well-known desire for compromise. Despite their differences and divisions, the trade unions often present joint demands on issues that are of primary concern to workers, such as wages or working conditions, and this demonstrates the strength of their pragmatism.

5. For further consideration of the history of Belgian unionism, see Tilly (2005).

3. The Belgian organisations in the early days of the ETUC: positions and tensions

Within a historical spectrum that dates from 1973 to the present day, it seems relevant to distinguish between two broad periods that characterise the relationship between the Belgian trade union confederations and the ETUC. They initially (1973–1991) participated with conviction, in line with their previous commitment dating from the 1950s. While not free from criticism and questioning, this European engagement was based on a shared project among the Benelux unions aimed at building a European trade union movement capable of federating its members and bringing weight to bear on the European institutions in order to strengthen workers' rights. Over the course of the second period, from 1991 onwards, differences of opinion and approach – already present but hitherto bubbling underneath the surface – emerged and coincided with a greater detachment on the part of the Belgian unions, which adopted an attitude that could be described as more pragmatic and less prescriptive.

It has to be noted that Belgian (and the other founder countries') involvement in developing a European trade union movement clearly predates the emergence of the ETUC. In fact, it was based on a longstanding community dynamic, passed down from generation to generation since the 1950s following the founding of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) in 1951. Paul Finet, former General Secretary of the FGTB, was a member of the High Authority from 1952 on, chairing it in 1958. We could go even further back, to the end of the Second World War, with the experiment that was the birth of Benelux in 1944 around a customs union that came into force in 1948 (Poidevin 1986). This was accompanied by union cooperation between the three founding member states of this organisation (Belgium, Luxembourg and Netherlands), based on the strategy of a common front in the face of the impact of the Cold War, one that was to prove beneficial in relation to Benelux's planned economic union (Grosbois 1998: 357). This strategy had a number of effects in the 1950s, with the formation of a special Benelux Commission prior to the creation of a Consultative Economic and Social Council via the Benelux Treaty of Economic Union of 3 February 1958 (Van Klaveren 1990). These were consultative bodies in which the unions were involved. While greater union integration was theoretically the result of the Benelux experience, this was hardly the reality in the long term.⁶

Moreover, the FGTB and the CSC were both active members⁷ of their international organisation's regional groupings. August Cool of the CSC was, moreover, one of the main architects behind the transformation of the International Federation of Christian Trade Unions (IFCTU) and the establishment of a regional European organisation to react to and take a position on the Treaty of Rome and its consequences (Pasture 1999: 280). On retiring from the presidency of the European Organisation of the World Confederation of Labour, which succeeded IFCTU (EO/WCL), he was replaced by his successor at the head of the CSC, Jef Houthuys. Before focusing on the place of the Belgian unions within the ETUC, it should be noted that we will here look only at the CSC and the FGTB. The liberal union, which only joined the ETUC in 2002, will not be considered (Faniel and Vandaele 2011: 47).

6. Benelux evolved as the coming together of Belgium, Netherlands and Luxembourg during 1944, around a customs union policy that came into force in 1948. See particularly Poidevin (1986).

7. Not forgetting the active role played by André Renard, see Tilly (2005).

3.1. CSC

A Christian organisation and pillar of the WCL, the CSC was not one of the founding members of the ETUC, which it joined during its first enlargement in 1974. Approved by the CSC's Board with a comfortable majority (177 for, 44 against and 10 abstentions), this decision did nonetheless give rise to a great deal of debate. The fear of being sidelined within an organisation that contained a clear majority of socialist unions was a real one. Moreover, the CSC would really have liked to maintain its freedom of choice in terms of international affiliation. Furthermore, the advisability or not of joining the ETUC needed to be seen in light of a national consideration: a fear of FGTB expansionism and its desire to unify the Belgian trade union movement.⁸ In this spirit, several people feared that European unification would merely be the prelude to an annexation of the CSC by the FGTB nationally. Under the impetus of its president, Jef Houthuys, and its general secretary, Robert D'Hondt, the CSC did nonetheless vote in favour of joining the ETUC, not before repeating that it would not abandon its founding values and that this decision would have no impact on the Belgian union movement. This decision was ultimately motivated by three reasons: (i) the 'long experience of union cooperation [between International Confederation of Free Trade Union/ICFTU and WCL organisations] at European level'; (ii) 'European enlargement' and the new challenges emerging at a time when an Economic and Monetary Union was being considered; and (iii) the appearance and development of ever more numerous 'multinational dinosaurs in Europe' and of 'big capital', in relation to which union unification was necessary to achieve an essential critical mass in the balance of power (CSC 1975: 447-449).

Once a member of the ETUC, the CSC was to forcefully and repeatedly advocate for better integration of the professional trade unions within the European confederation and then for strengthening the union committees, which needed more space within the ETUC. It also called for a stronger and more effective ETUC with the means to act and become a true European trade union organisation.⁹ One of the striking features of the early years of the enlarged ETUC was the persistent divisions between Christians and socialists. These took several forms and were vigorously denounced by Jef Houthuys, who became *de facto* spokesperson and representative of the Christian tendency within the ETUC.

One initial point of tension concerned their differential treatment with regard to membership issues. The CSC supported the membership of a Spanish member organisation of the WCL, USO. Several other members of the ETUC, such as LO Denmark and the FGTB, did not consider this organisation sufficiently representative to justify its membership. After years of underlying tension in this regard, Houthuys therefore likewise did not support the decision to allow UGT Portugal to join. It was, in his view, no more representative than USO. He walked out of the ETUC's executive committee meeting of 10 February 1983 in protest at what was, in his opinion, differential treatment and clear discrimination against a WCL organisation.

A second problem perceived by the CSC was its exclusion, along with other WCL member organisations, from the ETUC's different structures or similar bodies, such as the union committees and interregional councils, and particularly the Saarlorlux committee.

8. Comité exécutif de la Confédération européenne des syndicats libres, 13-14 mai 1970', 17 June 1970, p. 5. IISG, *ETUC*, No. 509.

9. See, for example, 'Poser des revendications innovatrices', 14 January 1991, in Dewulf (1994: 181-184).

One member of the CFDT, moreover, explained to a CSC colleague that, in his opinion, ‘opposition to your membership is far more political than geographic’.¹⁰ Houthuys was quick to make his grievances known to the General Secretary of the ETUC. One member of the CSC’s executive felt that some ETUC members, affiliated to ICFTU, were also doing all they could to exclude Christian organisations from some of the ETUC’s working groups.¹¹

Finally, Houthuys often voiced his opposition to meetings between the ETUC and socialist MEPs. He firmly suggested that the ETUC should not be politically exclusive and should be open to meeting other MEPs ‘friendly to the workers’ movement’, such as those within the European People’s Party (EPP) in particular.

Despite these issues, the CSC wanted to appear and be a loyal partner and member of the ETUC, participating actively in its work, from the executive committee down to the different working groups. The divisions between Christian and socialist unions, while far from paralysing its overall work, did remain a marked reality throughout the ETUC’s early years, at least from the CSC’s point of view. Despite its weaknesses, however, the ETUC of the mid-1980s appeared to represent a renewal of European trade unionism and the only valid opportunity for Christian trade unionism to exert any influence over the Community space in favour of workers. In any case, these internal divisions within the ETUC, linked to historical and ideological factors, had ceased to exist by the early 1990s.

3.2. FGTB

A founding member of the ETUC, the FGTB was also required to take a position on the ETUC membership (and enlargement) process, something that proved rather conflictual. It was, in any case, an opportunity for its general secretary, Georges Debunne, to repeat his surprise and incomprehension at a union (the CSC) that defends European unity – for him because it ‘represented almost nothing’ at this level – while advocating national and global pluralism.¹² This observation seemed to be a real obsession for Debunne, to the extent that he raised the issue of the Christian organisations’ membership at virtually every meeting. He was to vehemently demand, moreover, that the ETUC be expanded to incorporate the communist organisations at the same time as it welcomed those of the WCL. Faced with a contrasting reality, he did not vote on the CSC’s membership. As with the CSC, the fact that the two Belgian union confederations both belonged to the ETUC did not defuse these tensions. The ETUC was even exploited for the purpose of these clashes. A proposal was thus made to the FGTB’s executive that the ETUC should organise the necessary aid to Portugal, in order to pull the rug from under their feet and ‘neutralise the CSC’, which was trying to become involved in Portugal.¹³

In terms of positioning, the FGTB followed the path espoused by the ETUC by calling, at its Congress in November 1978, for an end to soft and subservient action towards the European institutions and for more robust European resistance from the trade unions.¹⁴

10. [A CFDT member] to Gérard Thiry, 7 February 1983. KADOC, *Fonds Jef Houthuys (bewaargeving ACV)*, No. D256.

11. ‘Procès-verbal de la réunion du Bureau’, 4 March 1980, pp. 3–5. KADOC, *Archief Robert D’Hondt*, No. D245.

12. ‘Comité exécutif de la Confédération européenne des syndicats libres, 17 février 1972’, 29 February 1972, pp. 5–6. IISG, ETUC, No. 518.

13. FGTB, ‘Bureau du 07 mai 1974’, 08 mai 1974. ftp://digital.amsab.be/archives/BE_AMSAB_144_ABVV/2_3_nationaal_bureau/0279_1944-1979_verslagboeken/0326_1974/1974_018_abvv_pv.pdf

14. See Gobin (1996); FGTB (1978: 235 ff).

When he became president of the ETUC, four years later, a disillusioned Debonne noted, however, that the ETUC's ambitious programme, set out in London in 1978, had hardly been a success and had been incapable of 'achieving the desired turnaround' (ETUC 1982: 258). During his inaugural speech, Debonne painted a grim picture of the Community situation, with high unemployment and the crisis hitting the weakest while the institutions continued to operate with little democracy. He recalled that 'passing resolutions' was not enough and that struggle was inherent in the union movement. In the current situation, he said, this was the only way of 'redressing the situation and achieving the social Europe that we all want' (ETUC 1982: 262).

3.3. Firm but ever more critical support

Throughout the whole 1973–1991 period, the Belgian confederations – like their Dutch and Luxembourg counterparts – supported the aim of a strong ETUC endowed with the resources needed to back up its action. Since it was founded, the FGTB had been calling for increased contributions and, above all, the incorporation of the European Trade Union Committees, which it considered essential for the ETUC's functioning. The relationship between these committees and the confederation was a delicate one given their desire for independence and their relationships with their international counterparts (Gobin 1996: 546–554). Moreover, they did not all represent the same number of countries.

The ETUC's reform, which began in 1991 (Gobin 1991), was in response to a demand from the Belgian unions for a stronger ETUC that would include the European Trade Union Committees and the Interregional Trade Union Councils (IRTUC) and pursue a trade unionism based on action. In fact, since its creation, the ETUC had been increasingly perceived as a lobbying organisation. The FGTB thus made a number of criticisms in this regard:¹⁵ the secretariat was trapped within this logic and relying too much on the goodwill of the European Commission.¹⁶ It accused the ETUC of being an organisation that had moved only in this direction for far too long. It called on it to change its direction and its methods. Strikes, protests and demonstrations of strength should also form part of the panoply of actions initiated by the ETUC. At the end of 1992, a day of European Action on the part of railway workers, with a strike in some countries, marked out the path to be followed. The general action of 2 April 1993, which brought a million people together in different gatherings, demonstrations and work stoppages across Europe, was another step in that direction. The FGTB and the CSC even organised a demonstration with their German and Dutch colleagues in Maastricht, a location of symbolic importance.

The CSC (which subscribes to restricted decision-making) adopted a more moderate position in this debate on ETUC reform. It encouraged a no less substantial increase in contributions, however, advocating their doubling.

The results of the internal transformation of the ETUC, commenced following the Stekelenburg report (the report coordinator was a member of the Dutch FNV), were not wholly satisfactory to some of the Benelux organisations, and this was important to the Belgian trade unions as they regularly cooperated with their neighbours. The FGTB felt

15. ETUC, Rapport Stekelenburg, Brussels, December 1990, pp. 11 ff.

16. FGTB, Rapport d'activité, Congrès statutaire des 19 et 20 novembre 1993, nd, p. 85.

that the improvements were 'insufficient'. This opinion established a dividing line that became increasingly demarcated between those who wanted European trade unionism to act as a protest movement and those who wanted it to concentrate on lobbying. The first camp included the FGTB and OGBL and, to a lesser extent, the CSC.¹⁷ For the FGTB, their autonomous national-level union policy was increasingly finding itself up against European limitations (competitiveness, budgetary standards). The disagreements focused not only on the ETUC's method of action but also on its position in relation to the EEC in general and the Maastricht process in particular. The FGTB and the CSC felt that the ETUC's attitude towards Great Britain's refusal to sign the Social Charter (part of the Maastricht Treaty) was overly naive. It seemed to consider it 'the lesser evil', the main thing being the inclusion of the Charter in the Treaty, while the Belgian organisations were more critical of the 'clause that enabled the United Kingdom to opt out of social Europe, thus creating the conditions for organised social dumping'.¹⁸ Moreover, the Belgian organisations denounced the lack of European political democracy, something that was not resolved with Maastricht. Some progress was nonetheless made with regard to social dialogue and this was favourably received by the Belgian unions. The possibility of signing European agreements, resulting primarily from the European Directive of September 1994 and enabling the formation of European works councils, was particularly welcomed by the Benelux organisations. These European works councils were considered, at least initially, as a victory in the context of demands for economic democracy. They represented progress insofar as they established, on paper at least, a right to information and communication that would enable workers and unions to organise as a consequence (Gobin 2004). Belgium was to be the first member state to transpose this Directive into law.

This real progress was insufficient to mitigate the split between some confederations and the ETUC. This was particularly the case with the FGTB and this division was to manifest itself in various ways. This came in the form of direct criticism when the Belgian socialist union denounced the ETUC's 'highly watered down list of demands'¹⁹ presented at its 1995 Congress. This could be interpreted as a refusal to toe a line that was judged lacking in any force but also as a mark of the difficulty in reaching agreements due to the continuing enlargement of the ETUC and the inclusion of unions from the countries of central and eastern Europe. The open conflict between the FGTB and the ETUC reached no conclusion in 1995 and the situation deteriorated over the course of different congresses to the point where the FGTB decided, exceptionally, not to participate in the 2003 Congress in Prague by way of protest. For Corinne Gobin, the reasons for this refusal, both formal and informal (Gobin 2004), lay in the failure to respect a pre-agreement between Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg that would enable the Belgian confederation to obtain a post in the secretariat. This failure meant that the FGTB obtained no such post. Other factors certainly played a role in this complex situation, however, which has finally ended on a positive note in more recent years, with the FGTB reinvesting in the ETUC in a clearly less conflictual manner.

Although in relative agreement with the political positions of the FGTB regarding the running of the ETUC, the CSC did participate in the Prague Congress where it alone

17. ETUC, Rapport Stekelenburg, *op. cit.*

18. AMSAB Gand, FGTB archives, Statutory Congress of the FGTB, 19 and 20 November 1993.

19. Constituent Congress of the FGTB in 1997.

supported the amendments that had been proposed jointly by the two Belgian organisations. While analyses and opinions differ as to the underlying reasons for this boycott, a conflict around the nomination (not endorsed in the end) of a Belgian candidate from the FGTB to the secretariat contributed significantly.

4. Some key examples at the heart of the relationship with the ETUC

4.1. Solidarność: Belgium at the forefront of the solidarity movement

‘The strike is at an end, we go back to work on 1 September...’ On 31 August 1980, a serious voice resounded through the immense conference hall at the Lenin shipyards in Gdansk, the large Polish port. It announced the end of a tough battle that had lasted 18 days on the part of the 17,000 shipyard workers.²⁰ The strike that started in the Gdansk shipyards led to the birth of a free trade union under the leadership of a young electrician who was to go down in history, Lech Walesa.

Belgium was one of the most vocal supporters of the Polish Solidarność movement, both its unions and other social organisations, who all mobilised their members in support of this democratic struggle. The Christian union was particularly involved in this while the FGTB, although not against Solidarność, did not consider it a priority (Goddeeris 2010: 243). Belgium’s domestic situation and the difficult relations between the CSC leaders and those of the socialist union does, of course, need to be taken into consideration. This being the case, the role of Polish exiles was crucial in the solidarity movement that was to develop post-1980 in Belgium.

The CSC, which was able to draw on the support of the WCL and its general secretary, Jan Kulakowski, himself Polish, and which cooperated closely with the Dutch union, CNV, in this matter, not only provided material support by means of humanitarian convoys but also developed a strategy, created a special commission and sent an official delegation to Poland. The regional inter-professional federations, the professional trade unions and the local union branches of the Christian union launched a special campaign for Poland and the Solidarność movement once martial law was established in December 1981. In fact, the Polish situation fitted well with the plans of the Christian union movement and its ideological directions. The support for a mass trade union with a Christian identity, defending the interests of workers in a socialist society, could but legitimise the role of the Christian union movement as a whole. For its part, the FTGB relied on ICFTU and preferred to focus particularly on supporting the British miners in the struggle against the neoliberal policies of the Thatcher government.

In 1979, at its congress in Munich, the ETUC encouraged its members to increase their national action with the aim of pushing forward its programme of demands. The executive committee of 29 and 30 November that same year had to face the facts, given that a European employment week was under way. The EEC’s Council of Social Affairs Ministers, which had just met, did not agree to a better distribution of available work as a priority action for employment. And yet the FGTB had been campaigning for reduced working hours for years as a solution to the employment crisis. It faced opposition from the German

²⁰. *Le Soir*, Il y a 20 ans, Solidarność changeait la Pologne, 31 August 2000.

unions, however, aimed at reducing working hours to 36 from 1984 onwards. The Benelux unions were also campaigning for a democratisation of the economy and greater political democracy within Europe. With regard to this last point, it was in their opinion essential that the European Parliament be elected by universal suffrage and given more power. Finally, it was also a question of giving the union movement space within the Community institutions which, for the moment, it felt it did not have.

4.2. The closure of Renault Vilvoorde

Between 1993 and 1997, the relocation of Grundig's and Hoover's operations was announced, followed by the resounding news of Renault Vilvoorde's closure in Belgium, events that all marked a significant failure for social Europe. The closure of Renault Vilvoorde, announced in February 1997 in order to rationalise the group's European production, sent a veritable tremor throughout the country's social and economic landscape because this company was employing 3,098 people, 2,635 blue-collar and 463 white-collar workers. At the request of Renault's board of directors, an expert was appointed to study the alternatives to closing Vilvoorde put forward by the European group's works committee, based on reduced working hours across all sites.²¹ The search for alternative solutions (essentially through reduced working time) was one of the major challenges for the works committee, and particularly for the CFDT. The aim was to exploit the outcry created by the Vilvoorde affair in order to build European solidarity, although this did not get very far in practice.²² The other French trade union organisations were not particularly favourable to reducing working hours across all Renault sites and the Spanish unions already had an agreement with the company to save jobs in Spain. As for the Belgians, they chose to negotiate a social plan. In short, there was still no real sign of a concerted union response emanating from the European level. This being the case, nationally, the Belgian government called on the National Labour Council (*Conseil National du Travail/CNT*) to give an opinion on the effectiveness of information and consultation procedures. The CNT proposed creating a link between the employer's requirement to inform and consult staff and the individual redundancies that occur when a mass lay-off is implemented. This opinion resulted in a law, adopted in 1998 and commonly known as the 'Renault law'. Union leaders were highly sceptical of the effectiveness of this law. For Marc Deschrijver (FGTB/white-collar workers), 'The Renault law only serves to occupy the workers by forcing them to participate in "consultations" and "information meetings".' At the end of the day, all the jobs were lost anyway.²³ And when the Ford Genk site closed 15 years later, Marc Leemans, president of the CSC, emphasised that his organisation considered Europe to be responsible for the closure. The proof, he explained, lay in the fact that Ford Genk had not only relocated to Spain but also to Germany where wage costs were higher.²⁴ For Marc Leemans, '*The real reason is not really the cost of labour.*' The problem was that Europe and its political leaders had agreed to harmonise Europe in economic and

21. Testimonial of Danielle Kaisergruber. Cited in 'Retour sur Renault Vilvoorde, Les Amis de l'École de Paris', session of 8 November 2001. Report written by Élisabeth Bourguinat. See the site of the Paris Management School www.ecole.org

22. *Idem.*

23. 4 December 2006. Cited at: <http://www.socialisme.be/fr/986/gacoms>

24. RTBF Matin Première, 22 October 2012. http://www.rtf.be/info/belgique/detail_fermeture-de-ford-genk-la-vraie-raison-n-est-pas-le-cout-salarial?id=7862877

free trade terms ‘but without harmonising social and fiscal matters’. This had created ‘wide disparities between member states, which multinationals are aware of and are exploiting’. This was ‘a handicap’ for our country.

4.3. The Doorn group as a stepping stone towards European-level wage negotiations?

For the Belgian unions, the information networks established through the Doorn group enabled quicker reactions within the context of social dialogue around certain employer demands. The Doorn group was born of an initiative of the Belgian unions. The law of 26 July 1996 on promoting employment and safeguarding competitiveness limited increases in Belgian wages, which were prevented from rising faster than those of its three major bordering countries. This pushed the Belgian unions to seek better coordination with their cross-border counterparts. The initiative led to international coordination of the sectoral dialogue, which the European works committees helped to strengthen in some cases. Linking the Dutch and German unions initially, the dynamic of the *Doorn group* – thus named because of the media coverage of a meeting held in that town – also included Luxembourg from 1998 on, and France from 2002 (Dufresne 2009).

This initiative owed much to the Belgian 1996 law on competitiveness and competition, which required wage performance to be compared with neighbouring countries (France, Germany, Netherlands, Luxembourg) and aligned in consequence. In September 1998, this new group, made up of inter-branch and sectoral representatives, published a declaration setting out its objectives (Fajertag 2000: 89). One of these was to launch a political offensive of joint demands aimed at combating social and wage dumping through an ongoing exchange of information and the adoption of a joint approach. This was the first time that confederations from a number of different countries had established a common direction with regard to wages (Fajertag 2000: 71). Despite the initial joint declarations, numerous meetings proved necessary before a decision could be taken. Even between confederations from economically close countries, the disparities often remained difficult to overcome. The ETUC nonetheless followed closely on the heels of this group, which was not formally a part of its structure but which it took as a point of reference. It established a Committee for the Coordination of Collective Bargaining (CCNC) in November 1999. In 2001, Doorn group cooperation extended into the area of non-wage demands during a conference on 6 and 7 September. The aim from then on was to fight all aspects of wage competition and to work to achieve the right to lifelong training. In September 2002, a strategy of benchmarking of working time and working time policy was accompanied by a desire to develop cross-border action around collective labour agreements focusing on pensions.

4.4. Pitting European workers against each other only creates misery

During a Benelux social summit on 13 February 2014, the unions from the three countries (LCGB, OGBL, FNV, CNV, MHP, FGTB, CSC and CGSLB) that make up this European organisation called on the heads of government to tackle social dumping and unfair competition between national workers and posted workers. The FGTB insisted, for example, as did the ETUC and numerous union confederations, on the need to forge a new path for Europe

aimed at combating social dumping. Realities unacceptable to the unions were denounced, such as posted Romanian lorry drivers working for Belgian companies and being paid EUR 200 a month when the sector had lost 4,000 jobs in four years. The case of Bulgarian construction workers paid EUR 6 per hour instead of EUR 15 when the sector in Belgium had lost 7,000 jobs was also conspicuous. Postings, temporary staff, sub-contractors, bogus self-employment, social fraud: all were being used to reduce wages, claimed the Belgian unions. Solutions could be found everywhere. During its federal committee of 27 February 2014, the FGTB highlighted the importance of including sectoral concerns and monitoring them through the European trade union confederations, along with democratic control of the way in which the European investment plan was being managed. The need for solidarity between member states was also considered essential: this plan had to support the countries and regions most affected by the crisis and unemployment.

In terms of the problems raised by the Directive on Posted Workers, the different unions in Benelux supported all the initiatives taken against social dumping. ‘We also support all measures aimed at better coordination of monitoring activities, without which neither the “posted workers” Directive nor the “implementing” Directive will be able to achieve the objective of putting an end to worker exploitation and social dumping.’ In July 2014, the socialist transport union, the BTB-UBOT, gave the Belgian authorities the names of 85 companies which, through subsidiaries established in eastern Europe countries, were apparently recruiting drivers on a wage clearly lower than the Belgian minimum wage.²⁵

As a concrete solution, the unions called for the establishment of a ‘social Europe’, namely a body of civil servants authorised to pursue abuses of worker postings across the national borders of a member state. Current good practice within the Benelux member states, which have long had problems related to worker mobility, could serve as an inspiration for the European Union as a whole.

4.5. Against the Bolkestein Directive

The question of service liberalisation in the context of the WTO (General Agreement on Trade in Services) mobilised a series of social actors in Belgium, including the unions, at the start of the 2000s. When John Monks, from the United Kingdom, was elected general secretary in 2003, the Bolkestein Directive became a new issue around which all of the trade union organisations could mobilise in particular. This Directive was named after the Dutch Internal Market Commissioner and aimed at ‘liberalising’ services within the European Union (Crespy and Petithomme 2010). The text was intended to stimulate growth and European competitiveness. From January 2004 on, the Belgian unions raised an early warning via a campaign entitled ‘Stop Bolkestein’, which served as a stimulus for European mobilisation aimed at challenging a number of the provisions of this proposed directive. This related particularly to its very wide field of application, including a large number of general interest services, and also the principle of country of origin, by which a company would be able to provide a service in another member state under the law of its country of origin (Crespy and Petithomme 2010: 157). Their French and German colleagues joined this protest movement, which then rallied numerous political parties, while the TUC and sectoral federations

25. *De Morgen*, 17 July 2014.

warned the ETUC that there was something in the pipeline although they did not know quite what.²⁶ In these different countries, the trade union organisations and other associations active in the political field, such as Attac, women's organisations, environmental organisations or those campaigning for development cooperation, formed a common front against this Directive. They feared that companies domiciled in states with high levels of social regulation would relocate their offices to countries where such regulation was more lax. The major fear was of a general lowering of social standards across Europe.

In Belgium, the conflict between the unions and the European Commission turned sour when Fritz Bolkestein's spokesperson described an FGTB publication criticising the Directive as 'a racist rag worthy of the National Front' (Crespy 2010: 161). The Commissioner issued an apology. Meanwhile, the Belgian unions were able to make the most of their effective links within the federal government, Belgian diplomacy and the European bodies, particularly the European Parliament, during the long stage of the reading of the draft directive in Parliament. In June 2004, on the eve of the European elections, an initial European demonstration took place. The Belgian unions also strongly supported two European demonstrations in March 2005 and February 2006. Their victory, based particularly on their work behind the scenes with MEPs and a show of force in demonstrations, especially in Strasbourg during the parliamentary vote, gave a positive feel back to the ETUC's lobbying work and demonstrated that this latter could combine such work with action of a more direct nature. Through their contacts with MEPs, the FGTB and CSC, in harmony with the ETUC, were able to influence the process at strategic moments such as the first and second readings of the draft directive in the European Parliament (Crespy and Petithomme 2010: 162).

5. A firmly proactive approach to the 2007 crisis

With the onset of the sovereign debt crisis, which hit Greece first at the end of 2009/beginning of 2010, the theme of European economic governance, and in particular the euro zone, suddenly became an issue of the utmost importance. This crisis was perceived as revealing weaknesses in the coordination of the economic policies of the euro zone, the very existence of which could be compromised. The idea of the Lisbon Agenda was ambitious but, after the 2005 review, the adoption of an ultraliberal approach triumphed. This perhaps coincided with and contributed to an increased feeling of disillusionment towards Europe. Claude Rolin (CSC Belgium) thus considered that the return of a new neoliberal flagship should have been prevented with a strategy conducted by Ecofin alone. The ministers of labour should also have been involved.²⁷ For the Belgian trade unions, as Anne Demelenne (FGTB Belgium) noted during the ETUC's executive committee of February 2010, the context marked by the restructuring of the Opel and INBEV groups occurred not because of a lack of flexibility or productivity. These restructurings, on the contrary, revealed the failure of the industrial choices made by companies and governments.²⁸

²⁶. Interview with Jozef Niemec, 26 March 2013, Brussels.

²⁷. AETUC, compte rendu de la réunion du comité exécutif du 23 février 2010.

²⁸. *Ibidem*.

Also in 2010, the European Union set a new mid-term strategy: the Europe 2020 strategy. This established that each member state had to produce an annual national reform programme focused on achieving these objectives, with the first year's programme to be produced by spring 2011. A Belgian Europe 2020 platform – formed of the main Belgian unions, environmental movements, the North–South movement and poverty networks – was launched with the aim of sending a series of signals to the different Belgian political leaders, enshrined in a joint text entitled ‘Europe must also be social and environmental’.²⁹ In any case, the internal market needed a legal framework and policies capable of protecting the social model, in line with the Lisbon Treaty. For the CGSLB,³⁰ this was a question primarily of:

- implementing the horizontal social clauses included in the Treaty and reviewing Directives that threatened fundamental workers’ rights and created social dumping within the Union itself: posted workers, working time;
- promoting decent work and fighting wage competition between member states via the idea of a minimum wage and upward harmonisation of social and employment standards;
- agreeing a clear legal framework that protects public and private social services of general interest, along with health care in Europe;
- getting the European Union to join the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms in order to make possible an alignment of the jurisprudence of the European Court of Justice and the European Court of Human Rights, aimed at achieving a healthier balance between fundamental social rights and economic freedoms.

Against the dramatic backdrop of the ongoing crisis, and following a successful European demonstration on 29 September in Brussels, the FGTB, CSC and CGSLB took the opportunity of a meeting on 4 December 2010 with Herman Van Rompuy, President of the European Council, to rally to the ETUC’s call to do everything possible to save jobs and for the recovery policy not to be prematurely interrupted at a time when the crisis in employment was spreading.

The Treaty on Stability, Coordination and Governance (TSCG), better known as the European Budgetary Pact, was signed on 2 March 2012 in Brussels by the heads of state or government of 25 member states of the European Union (exceptions being the United Kingdom and the Czech Republic) and it came into force on 1 January 2013. It was in fact stipulated that it would come into force when 12 member states of the euro zone had ratified it. This became the case on 21 December 2012. As of 7 March 2013, it had been ratified by 19 member states (13 of which are in the euro zone). In the absence of a satisfactory response to the demands expressed at the end of December 2012, the FGTB and CSC in an open letter called on all parliaments in Belgium not to approve the Treaty and to send a clear signal with regard to the harmful European economic policy.³¹ The FGTB asked MPs to refuse to approve the Budgetary Pact in April 2013. Not without humour, the CSC’s National Union of Employees (*Centrale nationale des employés/CNE*) extolled the marketing of the Treaty, which it said had already achieved its goal: to be as confusing and boring as possible

29. For the text of this platform, see http://www.csc-en-ligne.be/Images/NHP2013-platform2020def%20FR_tcm22-284008.PDF, site visited 26 September 2013.

30. *Europe: un levier pour l’action. Mémoire printemps 2010*. See <http://www.cgslb.be/publications/dossiers/memorandums/memorandum-elections-federales-2010/europe/>. Site visited 16 February 2015.

31. *L’Écho*, 8 March 2013.

so that ordinary people in the street would not be interested in it. Because if everyone had had a chance to look at it, there would certainly have been uproar.³² After more than 20 years of debate, on 22 December 2013, Belgium became the last State Party to the Treaty to ratify it, the Parliament of the Walloon-Brussels Federation being the seventh and final of the country's assemblies to do so.

Another major European concern of the Belgian trade unions has been the fight against tax fraud. Like many other unions and the ETUC, they would like to see the emergence of a fiscal Europe. Their national context has fanned the flames on this issue. On 6 November 2014, the Belgian population learnt through a blow-by-blow account in the media that their Luxembourg neighbours had established a tax optimisation scheme (the famous LuxLeaks scandal) and that the Managing Director of Omega Pharma, Marc Coucke, would not be paying 1 euro of tax on his company's 1.45 billion sales because his profits were not taxed in Belgium. This led Marc Leemans, President of the CSC, to state that

the anti-fraud policy is also unbalanced. The government's agreement focuses heavily on benefit fraud, with new "ingenious" techniques such as a benefit fraud helpline, and checks made even on unemployed people's water and energy bills. To date, however, there has been virtually no progress in the fight against wage fraud, employer contributions' fraud or tax fraud. Has the government yet announced the slightest initiative in this regard?

LuxLeaks was the height of 'tax hooliganism'.³³ The next day, a national demonstration brought 120,000 people out onto the streets of Brussels against the government policy. On Monday 15 December, Belgium was entirely paralysed by the largest strike in 30 years, called by all the trade unions and numerous associations. Strikers and demonstrators were protesting at the austerity measures announced by the federal government in order to meet Brussels' demands.

Finally, the proactive role played by the Belgian organisations in relation to the Commission's administrative simplification – or deregulation, as some would call them – programmes should also be noted. On 2 October 2013, the Commission published a communication on the REFIT (Regulatory Fitness and Performance) programme. In this, it announced new measures to 'lighten the [administrative] burden on companies', announcing in particular the continuation of quality evaluations and reports 'with a view to reducing the regulatory burden' but also the withdrawal of legislative proposals currently under way, along with a review of existing legislation (repeal, codification and so on). The Commission announced forthwith that it would not be submitting legislative proposals on health and safety at work for hairdressers or with regard to musculoskeletal disorders, screens and ambient tobacco smoke (European Commission 2013). The joint CGSLB-CSC-FGTB front rapidly launched the Rethink Refit campaign and the website www.rethinkrefit.eu, accompanied by a petition and the possibility of raising the issue with MEPs electronically. The Belgian unions denounced the deregulatory vision that saw all legislation as a burden, when in fact it is often protective. They also protested at the administrative simplification

32. CNE, Comprendre le pacte budgétaire en 12 minutes, 22 March 2013, see <https://cne.csc-en-ligne.be/cne-gnc/actu/Filinfo/le-pacte-budgetaire-en-12-min.html>

33. *Pourquoi la grève?*, on the site <https://www.csc-en-ligne.be/csc-en-ligne/Campagnes/un-plat-de-misere/faq-greves/interview-marc-leemans/interview-de-marc-leemans.html>

programme which, under the guise of technical adjustments, actually involved deeply political choices. They further denounced the weakening of standards intended to protect workers from occupational diseases and the challenging of workers' rights to information and consultation (particularly via the consolidation of directives on mass redundancy, worker information and consultation, company transfers and so on).³⁴ The Belgian trade unions insisted that the ETUC should take the case up and coordinate it, while inviting other European unions to join the action and make use of the standard letters they had produced.³⁵

6. Conclusion

The Belgian trade union organisations were early players in the establishment of European trade unionism, which was constructed gradually following the founding of the ETUC in 1973. It echoed the old dream of a United States of Europe that was shared by a good number of union leaders who were aware of, if they did not participate in, the initial steps towards the European Communities. Tensions that exist nationally between unions of different traditions have not prevented them from cooperating on a European level, and playing a pioneering role on some occasions. We can mention cross-border cooperation and the formation of interregional councils, for example, in which the Benelux unions played a major role alongside their German and French colleagues in the 1970s. At the start of the 1980s, the ETUC recognised and then coordinated these initiatives, and this was to result particularly in the establishment of the EURES network (Tilly 2010). The Doorn group should also be noted, along with the regular participation in European mobilisations coordinated by the ETUC.

The increasing number of ETUC affiliates has sometimes been considered by the Belgian unions as representing a kind of loss of coherence for European trade unionism. They are not opposed to the enlargements as such but the Belgian unions nonetheless advocate that this should be accompanied by an enhanced role for the ETUC. By refusing some internal transformations, European trade unionism has not, in their eyes, yet succeeded in moving far enough along the path of integration. Both the FGTB and the CSC have thus called for a substantial increase in contributions that would enable the ETUC to gain more independence from the Commission and also for it to have greater strength of action. In the meanwhile, attempts at regional-level groupings are being continued, this being considered more likely to be able to produce common demands – or better defend national interests. In this regard, however, the example of the Doorn group shows us that initial enthusiasm for such a regional grouping is not necessarily a gauge of its long-term success.

34. See, for example, the special issue of *Syndicaliste CSC* devoted to REFIT (No 822, 10 April 2015).

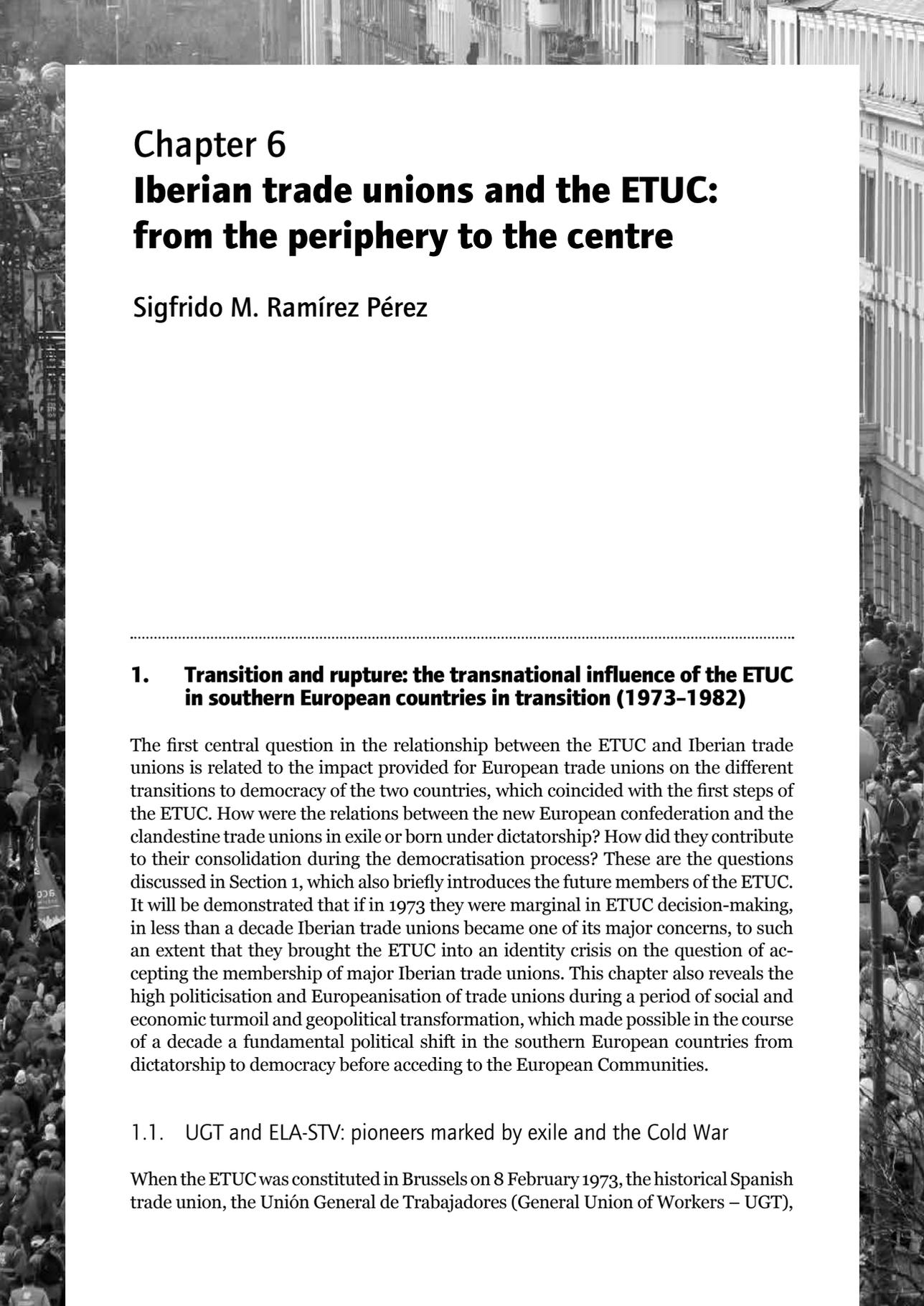
35. FGTB – *Note aux membres du Bureau fédéral: lancement de la campagne FGTB/CSC/CGSLB* www.rethinkrefit.eu: petition, 11 December 2013.

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Chapter 6

Iberian trade unions and the ETUC: from the periphery to the centre

Sigfrido M. Ramírez Pérez

1. Transition and rupture: the transnational influence of the ETUC in southern European countries in transition (1973–1982)

The first central question in the relationship between the ETUC and Iberian trade unions is related to the impact provided for European trade unions on the different transitions to democracy of the two countries, which coincided with the first steps of the ETUC. How were the relations between the new European confederation and the clandestine trade unions in exile or born under dictatorship? How did they contribute to their consolidation during the democratisation process? These are the questions discussed in Section 1, which also briefly introduces the future members of the ETUC. It will be demonstrated that if in 1973 they were marginal in ETUC decision-making, in less than a decade Iberian trade unions became one of its major concerns, to such an extent that they brought the ETUC into an identity crisis on the question of accepting the membership of major Iberian trade unions. This chapter also reveals the high politicisation and Europeanisation of trade unions during a period of social and economic turmoil and geopolitical transformation, which made possible in the course of a decade a fundamental political shift in the southern European countries from dictatorship to democracy before acceding to the European Communities.

1.1. UGT and ELA-STV: pioneers marked by exile and the Cold War

When the ETUC was constituted in Brussels on 8 February 1973, the historical Spanish trade union, the Unión General de Trabajadores (General Union of Workers – UGT),

was not originally included among its constituent parties. However, the day after, it was officially considered a founding member during the celebration of its First General Assembly. The reason for this ad hoc procedure was that the founders of the ETUC were from the EEC and EFTA countries, whereas Spain was a member of neither. On 24 January, the clandestine UGT had already bitterly complained that it had not even been invited as observer despite the tough fight it was having not only against the dictatorship, but also, they wrote, against the influence of the Communist Party of Spain among workers at home and Spanish migrants in Europe. Despite these complaints, UGT had reluctantly agreed to send just one representative as member of the ICFTU delegation. But once in Brussels, its delegate, organisational secretary Antonio García Duarte, managed to obtain an exception to the general rule and UGT was effectively included as a constituent organisation of the ETUC by unanimous acclamation of the organisations present.¹ In brief, the leader of the UGT had to gently force the doors of the ETUC, showing that the question of the limits of the ETUC and its vocation to reach over the institutional borders of Europe-wide political organisations was, and has remained, a central element in its identity. This precocious integration of trade unions from non-democratic countries and, later, those dominated by communist-led organisations, illustrates the political anticipation, and ambitions, of the new confederation.²

As the ETUC was constituted, it quickly asked to designate two representatives to the executive committee.³ Antonio García Duarte answered that he was just a substitute member of the main representative appointed by the UGT executive committee, Nicolas Redondo, whose clandestine name, 'Juan Urbieto', had to be used in any official document (Redondo 2002; García Santesmases 2007). The letter deserves to be quoted because it synthesises in a few lines the situation of the Spanish trade union movement during the last years of Franco's dictatorship:

Nicolas Redondo lives in Bilbao. But he is currently in prison, condemned for having been the main leader of the strike movements which since mid-January have taken place in the Basque Country (Viscay). He has been fined 200,000 Spanish pesetas but he refused that our organisation paid for his liberation. Otherwise he is on trial at the Court of Public Order which has requested that he be sentenced to eight years in prison.⁴

This was the precarious situation of the new leader of the historical Spanish trade union. UGT, created in 1888 had been the most important in the country and its trajectory was closely linked with the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE), to such an extent that the destinies of the two socialist organisations were interdependent. Just three years earlier, in 1970, the President and Secretary General of both organisations in exile for nearly 30 years had been the same person: the historical leader of the teachers' trade union (FETE-UGT), Rodolfo Llopis, whose personal assistant had been García Duarte. Llopis, who was a

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1. For García Duarte materials of the constitutive ETUC meeting see FFLC, UGT in exile, 000461-009, Invitation from T. Rasschaert and K. Sandegren to García Duarte, 22 January 1973. I thank Manuel Simón, in charge of International Relations at UGT, for having brought this source to my attention.
 2. Juan Moreno (2001: 145) quotes a letter from 24 January from Antonio García Duarte to Georges Debunne (President of the meeting) and Théo Rasschaert (ECFTU secretary).
 3. IISH, ETUC, 1306, Letter from Théo Rasschaert to Antonio García Duarte, UGT secretary general at Toulouse, 14-02-1973.
 4. IISH, ETUC, 1306, Réponse d'Antonio García Duarte à Théo Rasschaert, Secrétaire général de la CES, 20-03-1973.

freemason, faithful during the Spanish Republic to UGT leader Francisco Largo Caballero, had just been removed from the presidency during the 11th UGT Congress in 1971. At that point, the control of UGT shifted from the Republican exile to the ‘young turks’ of the interior. Duarte, based in Toulouse, became the organisation’s number two, whereas Redondo was designated as the new leader. Llopis had maintained his position as secretary general of the PSOE until its XIIth Congress in August 1972, but his influence had since waned, as most of the funding which kept the PSOE alive in exile actually came from the solidarity funds that the UGT received from the international trade unions adhering to the ICFTU, of which UGT had also been a founding member (Mateos 2008).

This institutional advantage of being already member of ICFTU provided the new UGT – and indirectly the PSOE – with decisive leverage for a process of accelerated catch-up with the hegemonic Communist Party of Spain and its Workers’ Commissions (Comisiones Obreras – CCOO), created as a clandestine socio-political movement but also with direct participation in the official trade unions of the dictatorship. Until 1971, UGT prioritised its international action and did not act within the legal framework of the official Francoist trade unions, not participating in its elections for workers’ representatives. It also preferred to achieve alliances, in agreement with ICFTU, with Spain’s other historical trade union, the anarchist National Confederation of Labour (Confederación Nacional del Trabajo – CNT) (Herrerín López 2004). This was requested on the basis that both shared a clear anti-communist position and met regularly at their main head offices in southern France. The two historical trade unions had long waited the return of democracy to regain their dominant positions among Spanish workers.

A similar strategy of international institutional activism without much influence within the labour movement in Spain was also adopted by the third, relatively minor, historical trade union, the regionalist Trade Union of Basque Workers (Eusko Langileen Alkartasuna-Solidaridad de los Trabajadores Vascos, ELA-STV). ELA-STV, like UGT, was intimately linked to a political party faithful to the restoration of a democratic Republic in Spain: the Christian Democrat Nationalist Party of the Basque Country (PNV) (Letamendia Belzunce 2004). However ELA-STV was a unique case because it was not only a member of ICFTU but also of the World Confederation of Labour (WCL). Despite this exceptional double international affiliation, it became clear that it was more active in the WCL than in ICFTU, if we believe the reply that the ETUC gave to ELA when the Basque trade union expressed its surprise at not having been invited, on the same footing as UGT, as a founding member of this new confederation, which was a direct inheritor of the ECFTU, of which ELA was also a member.⁵ ELA-STV, therefore, was not among the founding members of the ETUC, and had to formally apply for membership as part of the agreement that the ETUC and the European Organisation of the WCL had reached during the second half of 1973 for the automatic adhesion of the members of this regional branch of the Christian confederation to the ETUC. ELA-STV formulated its formal request on 4 March 1974 and was accepted by the ETUC executive committee three days later.⁶

UGT and ELA-STV had already fought together against the dictatorship by establishing international cooperation supported by ICFTU and the WCL. By the end of the 1950s

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5. IISH, ETUC, Supplément 281, Lettre du Comité national de ELA-STV à Théo Rasschaert et à Victor Feather, 04-04-1973 et réponse de Rasschaert le 12-04-1973.
 6. IISH-ETUC, Supplement 281, Letter from José María Leunda, deputy general secretary of ELA-STV to Théo Rasschaert, 04-03-1974 and reply to 08-03-1974.

this included contacts with the CNT, which coagulated into a formal agreement between the three on May 1961 to constitute the Spanish Trade Union Alliance (Alianza Sindical Española). It quickly expanded in Catalonia by including the Catholic Solidarity of Workers of Catalunya (Solidaridad Católica de Obreros de Cataluña- SOCC), linked to the regionalist Christian Democrats of Unió Democràtica de Catalunya. However, in this case, UGT and CNT representatives went much further than the line taken by their international directorates with the creation in 1962 of the Alianza Sindical Obrera de Cataluña, which culminated later that year at the national level with the creation of the Trade Union Alliance of Workers (Alianza Sindical Obrera), supported by the International Metalworkers' Federation. Such activism, supported by international funding, was in response to the fact that all these historical trade unions were losing touch with the rebirth of the trade union movement in Spain, which was mainly being carried out by two new clandestine organisations which had their own international connections: the Social Christian-led Workers' Trade Union (Union Sindical Obrera (USO) and the communist-led Workers' Commissions (Comisiones Obreras – CCOO).

Whereas USO originated in 1961 from the convergence of clandestine socialist militants who had quit the UGT, mainly in Catalonia, and members of various legal Christian associations,⁷ the Workers' Commissions movement (Comisiones Obreras) was born around 1957 out of the increasing convergence of a majority of clandestine communist leaders and a minority of social Catholic militants. What both new structures had in common was that they participated in the elections of workers' representatives of the official Spanish Trade Union Organisation (Organización Sindical Española – OSE) in order to articulate the requests of the 'new labour movement'. This was the term used to refer to the new generation of workers coming from rural areas and who found jobs in the new services and industrial sectors in cities and towns as a result of the industrialisation thrust of the 1950s. They often held clandestine meetings in churches, convents and Catholic private schools, as a clear sign of the central role that apostolic movements played against the Falange, the fascist-like party of the regime, which controlled the OSE. For UGT, ELA-STV and CNT, this was seen as a form of collaborationism and indirectly legitimised the regime and its supporters. However, due to the brutal repression of the 1940s and the later generational shift, their importance in working class memory declined and risked becoming marginalised in this new labour movement. This worried the ICFTU very much, which unsuccessfully sought to put pressure on the historical trade unions to acquire roots in the working class, instead of leaving the field open to the new labour movement, which it systematically refused to acknowledge as potential interlocutors.

It is important not to forget that despite the existence of the workers' internationals, the relations with organised workers in Spain from the part of European trade unions were developed largely independently by its members. The most symptomatic example was the case of USO, which made use from the very beginning of the international connections of the JOC network, as its founder, the Basque Eugenio Royo Errazkin, had been member of its international board. Its main ally abroad from the very beginning was the French CFDT. USO followed a similar evolution in the early 1960s, with an original blend of socialist and Christian principles, which led it to argue in favour of a socialist democracy, based

7. Christian Workers's Youth (Juventud Obrera Cristiana (JOC), Working Fraternities of Catholic Action (Hermandades Obreras de Acción Católica- HOAC), and the Jesuit Youth Workers Avant-garde (Vanguardias Obreras Juveniles).

on self-management and autonomy from political parties and religion. This principle of independence made it difficult to achieve an alliance with the UGT despite the strong pressure of the ICFTU. For the USO, the WTFU and the ICFTU were 'politically aligned with the hegemonic blocs with strong dependence on Moscow and Washington in the context of the Cold War'. Adhering to the WCL was discarded as it was based on confessional lines and therefore it chose to apply to join international industry federations. Thus, despite the opposition of UGT and the French FO, USO joined the International Metalworkers' Federation in 1969, counting on the increasing support of the Italian CISL – and the Italian unitary branch of the metal sector (FLM) – but also IG Metall. This opened the door from the end of 1974 to the executive committee of the European Federation of the Metallurgy, created in 1971.⁸

But the major political question for the new ETUC was also whether it would be possible for the two trade unions to merge into a single and strong social democratic federation capable of countering the dominant CCOO. On the establishment of the ETUC, USO's official responsible for international affairs, Francisco Leon (alias Raimon Castillo) applied to join, to which the ETUC secretary general did not reply, preferring to wait and see whether the events in Spain could lead to a change in the total opposition of UGT, supported in its veto by the DGB, Scandinavian, Belgian and Dutch organisations. Particularly revealing is Leon's internal evaluation of the new ETUC's political meaning for international trade unionism and for Spain. At first, it marked the irreversible emancipation of European trade unionism from US influence as understood by the complaint of the AFL-CIO to Vic Feather, Secretary General of the UK TUC and President of the ETUC, for having removed the term 'free' from its official name. This emancipation, welcomed by USO, also constituted a bet on a process of unification of the various traditions of trade unionism in the 'strategic project of a new industrial, social and economic Europe', which would also 'defreeze' relations with Communist-led trade unions in western and eastern Europe. This 'open and positive project' was also a means to efficiently confront a Europe based on monopolies and in particular for USO the most fundamental task was coming to terms with a new reality: 'common and coordinated action of trade unions towards multinational corporations'. For Spain, USO saw the ETUC as a possible instrument of international solidarity with the European working class, in particular against multinationals and solid support against 'fascist trade unions'.⁹

This request for ETUC membership was reiterated on 14 May 1974, but the official reply requested that USO met UGT's conditions, which amounted to its merger with UGT. This was something that USO was obviously not ready to accept, having been publicly accepted, together with UGT, CCOO and ELA, as a member of the ILO's workers' group at the ILO's 59th International Conference in June 1974. It had even participated in a joint press conference boycotting the presence in this delegation of the OSE's representatives. In the previous European regional conference of 14 January 1974 it had not managed this, despite the fact that its allies from CISL (Gloria Baduel) and CFDT (Pierre Salanne) had already invited it to join the workers' group in response to the invitation made by the Soviet trade

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8. FLC (Fundación Largo Caballero), José-María Zufaur's Papers, 000797 (3) Informe sobre la política internacional de la USO en la década del 60, undated, most likely second half 1970; Informe de la Delegación exterior al Comité Ejecutivo sobre las relaciones internacionales, 20-07-1978.
 9. *Idem*, 000797 (4), USO, La Confederación Europea de Sindicatos, undated, most likely summer 1973.

unions to invite CCOO.¹⁰ Even when the UGT's representative rejected any intervention on their part, UGT exercised a strong influence over the ILO workers' group as from 1974 the secretary general of this group and on the ILO's Administrative Tribunal was UGT's very own José Antonio Aguiriano. He had been appointed by ICFTU secretary general, the German Otto Kersten as its representative in this international organisation, after having worked in the ICFTU's offices in Brussels for many years. In this context of open rejection from UGT and the ETUC, USO chose instead to cooperate with CCOO with common candidates for the 1975 elections of workers' representatives, giving some weight to CCOO's ambitions of creating a unitary Spanish trade union similar to what was happening in neighbouring Portugal at that time.

1.2. Comisiones Obreras and the CGTP: similarities and differences between two communist-led trade unions

The exact nature of CCOO is a complex matter and has been the object of considerable controversy. At the beginning of 1975, this communist-led workers' movement had not yet decided about its definitive organisational form as a new trade union. Moreover, the central role that the Spanish Communist Party (PCE) played did not mean that this was the typical 'Communist totalitarian' movement – as it was termed by UGT and CNT – but rather, as CCOO defined itself at the moment of its formal creation, an independent, democratic and unitary socio-political movement in which converged various political traditions and most of the new working class of the country in order to bring democracy to Spain. Indeed, CCOO was from the very beginning the first and most important instrument of the Spanish Communist Party's opposition to the dictatorship. Nevertheless, it genuinely aimed to facilitate the convergence of all existing trade unions. For this reason, UGT tried for many years to demonstrate to the ETUC secretariat and its members that in reality CCOO was a convinced communist trade union closer to the French CGT – with dependent relations with the communist WTFU and the Soviet Union – than to the Italian CGIL, which had been admitted on 9 July 1974 to the ETUC, despite having been a member of the WTFU and retaining the status of associate member even after its adhesion to the ETUC (Moreno 2011).

CCOO's first request to discuss the conditions for eventual ETUC membership took place on 20 February 1973, less than two weeks after its creation. This letter was addressed to President Feather, together with another sent to the man responsible for the international committee of the TUC, Jack Jones, a former volunteer in the International Brigades in the Spanish Civil War, who supported CCOO's case for membership.¹¹ This request for an interview was, however, not a pressing demand, because CCOO was still attached to its original strategy of shifting from a clandestine social movement with a decentralised organisation provided by the Spanish Communist Party, to become the broad basis for a unitary trade union in which existing organisations could integrate, while preserving their identity. This strategy implied the political will of building a single confederation and therefore it would have been premature to request adhesion to the ETUC without knowing

10. *Idem*, 000797(7), letter from Miguel Sánchez Mazas (UGT representative to international organisations) to Raimon (USO representative at the ILO), 21-05-1975.

11. FPM (Fundación Primero de Mayo), DECO 04-06, Letters from DECO to Jack Jones and to Vic Feather, 20-02-1973.

whether UGT would give up its opposition. If we believe the confidences of an unidentified UGT leader to the US Embassy in Madrid, CCOO was also waiting for CGIL to be admitted first, in order to request adhesion and, together with the French CGT, create a communist current within the ETUC. UGT had stated that it would accept CCOO on condition that it publicly declared its communist identity, even when CCOO was not a candidate for WFTU membership. This was an impossible condition because it implied renouncing the unitary trade union strategy.¹²

This was not an isolated case because in Portugal another communist-led workers' commission was pursuing the same objective as CCOO, namely the creation of a unitary trade union with various ideological strands co-existing under the hegemony of the Portuguese Communist Party (PCP). Favourable to this endeavour was the fact that in Portugal there was no historical trade union in exile with international connections and the PCP was to become part of the government after the Carnation Revolution of 25 April 1974. The latest research has demonstrated that, in contrast to the PCE, the PCP lagged well behind in relation to its status in the labour movement. This was not just because the workers' commissions appeared only from 1969 when the new Prime Minister Marcelo Caetano had made some legal changes allowing the election of independent workers' representatives in an attempt to legitimise the regime after a wave of strikes in 1968. Indeed the PCP was present at the 19 October 1970 meeting of the members of some of these local and branch workers' commissions, although at the initiative of the Movimento d'Esquerda Socialista (Socialist Left-MES), which was active in the Movimento Democrático Portugues (MDE). The PCP was no longer really hegemonic at that point because these workers' commissions included also Catholic, socialist and radical-left workers' representatives.

It was only after this coordination of workers' commissions, the so-called Intersindical, had been declared illegal on 26 July 1971 that the PCP started changing its strategy in the trade unions and passed from being an anti-fascist alliance with works councils seeking socialism to calling for the more active construction of a unitary trade union confederation to defend the new regime from its opponents, left and right. Thus, the Revolution marked a decisive acceleration, going from common action to the struggle for 'integration' (*'unificação'*) and hegemony. The new government, in the new law on trade unions, under the direction of a PCP Minister of Labour, declared the continuity of the single trade union policy. The main objective was to stabilise the new state in the face of the series of strikes, which disorganised a seriously weakened economy under pressure from the extreme left to take the path towards self-management by works councils. The main argument put forward by the PCP was that 'integration' was equivalent to a single union, which could also guarantee democracy and influence the Revolution.

The fact that the PCP, to provide international backing for this position, brought to Portugal trade union representatives from the Soviet bloc – in particular from East Germany – and the French union leader Georges Marchais, seriously worried western international observers, particularly the United States and the Federal Republic of Germany, but also all members of the ETUC and the ICFTU (Valente 2001; Varela 2010, 2011). After an official ICFTU mission to Lisbon to make contact with the different trade union strands, Otto Kersten sent a new two-week mission to Lisbon, involving one of the new young leaders of

12. Wikileaks files, Kissinger Cables, Confidential telegram from Madrid Embassy, Spanish Clandestine Groups and the ETUC, 21-05-1974.

UGT, Manuel Simón, and Dieter Wagner from the DGB. Wagner, who represented the DGB in Chile before the Pinochet coup, returned to set up an ICFTU office in Lisbon. Simón was a member of the leadership-in-exile of PSOE and UGT and later was made responsible for international relations at UGT from 1976 until 1985.¹³ The mission was clear. They were to provide support for the weak socialist strands within the workers' movement to prevent a decree from the Revolutionary Council making compulsory the integration of trade unions and maintaining the prohibition on their international affiliation. However, this took place on 30 April 1975.

This was, however, an ephemeral victory for the PCP as very quickly the new Constitution of 1976 removed both legal constraints. With pluralism again an option the Socialist Party of Mario Soares brought together the socialist members within the Intersindical in the so-called *Carta Aberta* platform. From 27 to 30 January 1977 the Intersindical finally organised its first national congress, becoming the Confederação Geral dos Trabalhadores Portugueses (CGTP)-Intersindical Nacional (IN). This was boycotted by the *Carta Aberta* and other members close to the Socialist Party, despite the fact that the CGTP demonstrated that even when controlled by the communists, other ideological minorities were also represented (extreme left, left socialists, and even the social Catholics of BASE-FUT) (Nunes *et al.* 2011; Cartaxo *et al.* 2011).

With the joint international support of the DGB and the AFL-CIO, the Socialist Party and the Social Democratic Party encouraged the creation of a new trade union, which on 25–26 January 1979 gave birth to a new confederation, whose name and logo was similar to that of the Spanish UGT: the União Geral de Trabalhadores-Portugal (UGT-P). Led by José Manuel Torres Couto, UGT-P was very strong among white-collar workers, but weak in industry. For the ETUC secretariat, who attended the meeting, the challenge was to demonstrate that allowing this organisation to join the ETUC was not just a political operation opposed to the Intersindical. UGT-P's strategy for joining the ETUC was to take the long road, first becoming a member of ICFTU.¹⁴

In conclusion, it was the rejection of the Iberian Socialists of integration within the communist-led workers' commissions in both countries that explains the fragmentation of Iberian trade unions after the dictatorships. The still-clandestine UGT took a decisive step when it held its first public Congress in Spain during 15–18 April 1976, with the ambiguous support of the Spanish government and the backing of all the most prominent members of the international trade union movement. A few months earlier, Simón had been preparing the last Congress in exile to be held in Brussels in order to thank the ICFTU and ETUC for their support to the Socialist Trade Union, but Redondo decided at the last minute to hold it in Madrid, instead. Such a public congress marked a clear position against any kind of unitary confederation, as suggested by CCOO. Simultaneously, UGT tried to increase its weight as much as possible by merging with USO, on the basis that it had international political and trade union support, whereas USO had an 'infantry' of delegates which the UGT lacked and which would enable it to challenge CCOO in the first legal elections of trade union delegates.¹⁵

USO resisted until its first Congress on 7–10 April 1977, at which it elected José Maria Zufiaur as its secretary general. After the political elections in June at which USO had

13. FLC, Oral archives, 4209-001, Interview with Manuel Simón by Alicia Alted 17-05-2010, pp. 52–54.

14. IISH, ETUC, SUPPL-283, ICFTU, Report on the UGT Congress in Portugal, Oporto, 27–28 January 1979.

15. IISH, ETUC; 1321, Confidential note from Manuel Simón to Mathias Hinterscheid, 13-08-1977.

bet on the triumph of the Socialist Popular Party of Enrique Tierno Galván, the victory of the PSOE led to a serious reflection about what the future might hold for USO. Zufiaur was now in favour of the merger of USO with UGT. One of the main elements in the discussion was the impossibility of joining the ETUC, which was a clear mandate of the Congress. But his deputy, responsible for political relations, Manuel Zaguirre, was entirely opposed to what he saw as clear pressure on USO from the Socialists to renounce to its independence, which had motivated USO to prefer joining the ETUC and its industry federations, such as the European Metalworkers Federation, instead of one of the existing international confederations. The international pressure on USO was extremely strong, not just from European unions, which had always supported it, but also from the almighty AFL-CIO's delegate in Europe, Irving Brown, who urged Zaguirre to merge in order to stop CCOO's possible election triumph. But Zaguirre managed to resist a split in October 1977 and kept the organisation afloat even when it became clear that joining the ETUC in such circumstances would be impossible. Having lost the support of the French CFDT, which Simon had convinced to support the merger, from 1977 USO followed the advice of Emilio Gabaglio, the international affairs director of CISL. He recommended knocking on the door of the WCL, which by 1980 had accepted the new USO as a full member, which subsequently left the branches associated with ICFTU to join those of the WCL.¹⁶

1.3. The first failed applications (CCOO, USO, CGTP, UGT-P) to join the ETUC: 1979–1982

On 30 May 1975, CCOO took a supplementary step towards joining the ETUC with a letter sent to the President, Heinz-Oskar Vetter (DGB), in which it requested a meeting, which received a positive answer, delegating responsibility to Jan Kulalowski. On 9 September in Brussels the confederal secretary met the CCOO delegation headed by the man in charge of international affairs, Carlos Elvira, together with two members of CCOO Catalonia (José Luis López Bulla and Antonio Luchetti), which temporarily held the national coordination after the imprisonment of the CCOO leadership. This meeting was followed on 13 January 1976 by a direct request for membership sent to Vetter by the founder of CCOO, Marcelino Camacho, in which the Spanish leader thanked him for the solidarity showed by the ETUC with the CCOO leadership after their judgment in the famous 1,001 Process of 1973 (Camacho 1990). So far, there had not been an official request for membership because such a fundamental question had to be settled at the first CCOO General Assembly, which took place in July 1976 in Barcelona, still under clandestine conditions.

The stakes of seeking membership were very high because this would amount to a renunciation of the unitary trade union strategy. However, the question of deepening this strategy or constituting itself as an autonomous trade union, as UGT was urging them to do, was at the centre of the debate. According to the latest research, Julián Ariza and Nicolás Sartorius, who with Camacho constituted the core of the secretariat of CCOO, received an ambiguous mandate to take a final decision, which they took at the end of September after having consulted with Luciano Lama, Secretary General of CGIL. This connection, including

16. FLC, Interview, Manuela Aroca to Manuel Zaguirre Cano, 16 April and 10 May 2010, p. 118. I would like to thank Manuela Aroca for making this interview available.

substantial financial support from Italian trade unions, was crucial because the dominant political tendency within CCOO was the Euro-communist tendency represented by Sartorius, which was also the dominant political line of the PCE led by Santiago Carrillo in the footsteps of Enrico Berlinguer and his 'historical compromise' strategy (Molinero 2012).

Such a decision to abandon the path towards a single trade union created a split from two Maoist trends (Revolutionary Organisation of Workers [ORT] and the Party of Spanish Workers [PTE]), which gave birth to two ephemeral trade unions – CSUT and SU – which incorporated the word 'unitary' in their name to express their fundamental dissent. The confirmation of this fundamental decision took place in October but it also opened the door to the exit of many militants from CCOO to UGT, particularly after the political elections, as a result of which the PCE found itself in a minority in relationship to the PSOE, contrary to what had been expected by CCOO. The challenge for CCOO became to constitute itself as a trade union without changing its nature as a 'socio-political movement' based on local and regional assemblies, more than on a strong organic centralisation. This was to a large extent achieved at its founding congress in June 1978, when it was officially created as the Confederal Trade Union of CCOO, which elected Marcelino Camacho as secretary general and gave him a formal mandate to request membership of the ETUC (Moreno 2011).

This ideological plurality and territorial bottom-up approach became a distinctive feature of CCOO in contrast to the highly centralised and top-down UGT, which in just two years successfully built trade union structures from a small central secretariat closely linked to a single political party, the PSOE. Such a miracle was possible due to its European connections at the ETUC and ICFTU. In 1976 the total amount of international solidarity funding amounted to 40 million Spanish pesetas, but it was far from the minimum that UGT had calculated as necessary to create a minimum infrastructure in the country as a whole. The decisive thrust came from the solidarity loan of 10 million DM (4 million US dollars or 300 million Spanish pesetas) that it received in spring 1977 from the Bank für Gemeinwirtschaft (BfG) at the request of Heinz-Oskar Vetter, DGB President, with a guarantee provided by the Spanish government that it would return UGT its assets confiscated during the Spanish Civil War.¹⁷

The firm commitment of German trade unions in Spain and Portugal to support social democratic trade unions against communist-led trade unions was without doubt an important, but not the sole reason for the failure of CCOO and CGTP-IN to be accepted by the ETUC. On 4 July 1978 Camacho and the new secretary of international relations, Serafín Aliaga, sent a letter requesting adhesion to the ETUC, in which they emphasised the plurality of CCOO and its unitary strategy, which corresponded to the spirit of the ETUC. They were not alone in their request as USO – also SOC, CSUT and SU but without much chance of success – and the two Portuguese trade unions had also applied for membership. As USO had joined the WCL, it received support from its European partners from the Christian International, whereas the TUC and the FGTB expressed the view that if UGT-P was accepted, it would be impossible to reject CCOO, which counted on the support of the Italians.

In such a complex situation of southern European enlargement, the ETUC decided to work out some criteria for adhesion (democratic statutes, representativity, free, independent, inter-sectoral), which each of the total of 18 candidates, including the five Spaniards and the two Portuguese, had to fulfil. After receiving the applications, the ETUC Executive

17. AdsD, DGB Archiv 24/139, Vetter to Hesselbach, 18-04-1977, quoted in Muñoz Sánchez (2013).

Committee discussed them with the aim of reaching a consensus on 12–13 June 1980. The new ETUC president, Wim Kok, concluded that whereas the small Spanish trade unions (CSUT, SOC and SU) were clearly to be rejected, the cases of USO and CCOO were to be postponed to the first half of 1981 following a report from the Secretariat and the Finance and General Purposes Committee. The decision on the Portuguese were also postponed considering that UGT-P was not very representative, whereas CGTP-IN was too influenced by the WFTU to be considered ‘democratic’ enough and took hostile positions towards European integration, bringing it closer to CGT, which was, in contrast to the others, a WFTU member.¹⁸

By April 1981, a broad consensus seemed to be emerging after an update of the positions of various trade unions, which required more time. Ultimately, however, all Kok’s conciliation efforts came to nothing, as his predecessor, Vetter, publicly declared during the summer in Lisbon and Madrid that if CCOO and CGTP-IN joined the ETUC, the DGB would quit. This clearly undermined the effectiveness and consensus-driven functioning of the ETUC.¹⁹

A provisional consensus now seems to have been reached on the historical controversy about the veto of CCOO and CGTP-IN. For most authors and former actors, if these two questions were justified to a large extent during the period of transition to democracy, the first veto of UGT, and its ally the DGB, in 1981 and the subsequent UGT veto until December 1990 were anachronistic and disproportionate. It was argued on the basis of the political prejudices of the Cold War, namely anti-communism, but in reality was guided by UGT’s instrumental use of its international affiliations to obtain clear advantages in its internal competition with CCOO for the adhesion of Spanish workers (Aroca Mohedano 2011).²⁰ Indeed, the veto of CCOO was not something that UGT could have achieved on the basis of trade union reasons alone. It was in reality a German veto motivated by domestic and international political reasons, decided by the DGB (Vetter) and IG Metal (Hans Matthöffer) as part of the broader international policy defined from 1974 by the SPD (Willy Brandt) and the German government (Helmut Schmidt), and worked out to a large extent by the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, to defeat the instability created by the rise of Euro-communism and its possible consequences in Europe in the framework of the Cold War.

The latest scholarship about the role of these German actors in the transition to democracy in Spain and Portugal is conclusive in this direction: neither UGT nor the PSOE would have managed to become central actors of the transition without the decisive help of ‘German friends’. These agreements between the socialist trade unions with the Francoist elites were strongly mediated by German actors, in particular in the trade union field, even when their attempt to transpose German trade union relations, as suggested by Hans Matthöffer at the request of the King of Spain, were not successful because they implied, among other things, a unitary trade union (Muñoz Sánchez 2012: 139 ff).

The mutual interaction and comparison with the Portuguese case is decisive here. The same German actors were responsible for the creation of the Portuguese Socialist Party

18. IISH, ETUC, SUPPL 291, Secrétariat CES, Document interne, Réflexions sur les demandes d’adhésion, 22-01-1980.

19. IISH, ETUC, SUPPL 293, Letter from Wim Kok to Heinz-Oskar Vetter, 28-09-1981. The letter has been reproduced in extenso in Juan Moreno (2001).

20. This thesis is confirmed by Emilio Gabaglio in the preface to this book. It corresponds to a large extent to the arguments put forward in various writings by the historical representative of CCOO in the ETUC, Juan Moreno. See the most recent (Moreno 2013).

and later of UGT-Portugal. These were not historical organisations like UGT and the PSOE, and like them before 1973 did not have a central role in the effective opposition to the dictatorship within the country. However, they became the central pivot of the transition to democracy with their own political social democratic project between the heirs of the dictatorship and the historical internal opposition directed by the communist parties. In this respect, the DGB became allied with the AFL-CIO, which in 1981 was negotiating its return to the ICFTU.

But if the German role was crucial, US pressures were also at work in this veto. According to an internal CCOO memo a decisive meeting took place on 19 June 1981 in Geneva between the presidents of AFL-CIO, Lane Kirkland, and of ICFTU, Otto Kersten, who was seconded by Vetter and Murray from the TUC. At that meeting Kirkland made it a central condition to reject CCOO's application for ETUC membership, as this could have changed the balance of forces within the ETUC in favour of communist-led trade unions. Kersten reported this to the ICFTU, but the Italian trade unions and the FGTB considered such a conditionality unacceptable as a matter of principle. In August the executive committee of AFL-CIO again insisted on this blockade and asked the DGB to quit the ETUC if CCOO was accepted by the majority of other trade unions. Vetter accepted such a request and made trips to Spain and Portugal where, apart from UGT and UGT-P, he met Mario Soares, Pinto Balsemao and Felipe González. It was in this context that he made public the opposition of the DGB to the admission of CCOO and CGT-P on the basis that it would only serve to divide the ETUC by creating a southern European faction composed of French, Italian, Spanish and Portuguese trade unions prone to cooperate with communist trade unions, putting in difficulty UGT, ELA and UGT-P. For Vetter, Euro-communism was just another tactical movement to find allies. For CCOO and its leader, Marcelino Camacho, this position was rather a political and ideological veto against the basic nature of the ETUC, which served to effectively divide and subordinate it to Cold War divisions. Camacho's handwritten notes were clear on the ultimate reason for the veto: 'strengthening US hegemony and pursuing its strategy of tension' in the framework of the confrontation policy followed by the new Reagan administration.²¹

The fact that in 1981 the DGB threatened to break up the ETUC if CCOO was accepted was a clear sign that it was more important for this trade union not just to comply with the AFL-CIO's requests, but also with German foreign policy's interest in stabilising southern Europe, as already defined by Willy Brandt and continued by Helmut Schmidt, than to lead the definition of the common European interest through the ETUC. With this veto the DGB decided not just the fate of CCOO and CGTP-IN, but also the subsequent capacity of these social democratic governments to stabilise these young democracies from conservative encroachment and the influence of competing trade unions in southern Europe. The hegemony of communist-led trade unions might create serious problems for the adaptation of the Spanish and Portuguese economies to the challenge of EEC enlargement, as both countries had applied for membership and were preparing their admission. In a nutshell Spain and Portugal represented a tough test for the ETUC, which opened up the question of its nature and limitations in terms of emancipating itself from the excessive influence of its largest organisations, which put the national interest and international considerations before those of the ETUC.

21. F1M, Fondo Marcelino Camacho, SG 51/04, Nota informativa de la Secretaría de Relaciones Internacionales a los miembros del Secretariado Confederal. Handwritten notes by Camacho, unspecified date, most likely September 1981.

2. From transition to accession (1983–1991)

2.1. The role of UGT, UGT-P and ELA-STV in the integration of Spain and Portugal in the EEC (1983–1986): conditions for accession

The long shadow of the Cold War also favoured the newly created UGT-P, which very quickly was accepted in the ICFTU (December 1979) and got the support of the DGB and UGT to obtain quick access to the ETUC on 10 February 1983. These same actors had already rejected CGTP on 29 January 1982, despite the fact that CGTP officially submitted its first application to join the ETUC on 15 January 1979, when UGT-P had just been constituted (October 1978). If the reasons put forward by the ETUC were directly related to CGTP's political conception and practice of trade unionism, which diverged fundamentally from that of the ETUC, nothing was said about another important point: their antagonistic position vis-à-vis the European construction (Costa 2000).

CGTP's position on this was surely the most euro-sceptical of all the Iberian trade unions. This was fully justified from the viewpoint of a trade union that regarded itself as a defender of the economic order based on nationalisation, which the Revolution had brought about. Even before the official request by Portugal to join the EEC on 28 March 1977, the Mario Soares government contacted the Intersindical to reassure them that the nationalised banking and insurance services would remain part of the public sector and that Portugal would use the veto in the Council of Ministers to block any regulation going against the national economic system. This was important as CGTP, contrary to the PCP, did not oppose Portugal joining the EEC, but took a critical view because of the possible structural consequences of this economic shock for a weak and backward economy dependent on IMF loans (Carvalho da Silva 2007: 339–340).

CCOO's position towards Europe was straightforward, being favourable to the accession requested by Spain on 27 July 1977. This was very much in line with the favourable turn that the Spanish Communist Party has taken towards the EEC from its 1972 Congress, when Santiago Carrillo abandoned the Soviet position which considered the EEC as just as a monopolist and imperialist project with anti-Soviet purposes. Thus, from its first Congress in June 1978, CCOO supported the integration of Spain in the EEC and reiterated it three years later at its second Congress in the same resolution which asserted their request to join the ETUC. For Marcelino Camacho the reasoning was clear, notwithstanding misgivings about possible initial difficulties:

departing from the principle that trade union struggles are structured by the economy from the instruments of production and technology we conclude that the creation of multinational corporations and political-economic spaces call for a united Europe and a united, plural and autonomous ETUC, with wider relationships.²²

For UGT things were even easier because as a result of their double militancy with the PSOE, they had already been integrated in the various movements favourable to European integration, such as the Socialist Movement for the United States of Europe and the Spanish Federal Council, which constituted the Spanish section of the European Movement.

22. FIM, Sg 51/04, Meeting of the CCCO with the Executive Committee of the ETUC, Brussels, 17–12–1981.

Nevertheless UGT was already conscious that if the European project benefited multinational firms and economic groups the creation of another Europe required that they be confronted and the rights of workers defended more effectively. As a full member of the ETUC, UGT organised the first Conference for the Study and Analysis of the EEC in 1979, soon after the start of the negotiations for enlargement early that year. The activation of the trade union in this question was crucial even when they were involved only in relation to partial and specific questions already discussed in Brussels. When the PSOE formed a government at the end of 1982, trade unions in general, and UGT in particular, were invited to a systematic and institutionalised consultation in the overall negotiation process (Aroca Mohedano 2011: 151–158).

The reluctance to accept southern enlargement did not come from the trade unions in Spain and Portugal, but from the Social and Economic Committee of the EEC, particularly the French members, who from 1978 had opposed enlargement on the basis of unfair competition for new member states with regard to agriculture, textiles and steel. By contrast, the ETUC had made an official declaration on 27 January 1976 in support of the accession of Spain and Portugal to the EEC because they saw it as a condition of democratisation, bringing about a democratic rupture with the previous regime. Therefore the ETUC closely followed all aspects of the accession of both countries and on 17–18 March 1980 it held its first conference on enlargement, which included UGT, CGT-Greece and UGT-P.

UGT demands concerning EEC accession were representative of the other trade unions from accession countries. At first the central issue was the free circulation of workers, for which there was to be an initial delay of seven years during the transition period of accession, but which was reduced ultimately to just five. A second demand was the use of the European Social Fund to benefit backward regions with sectors in decline, such as several industrial sectors for which all unions requested an impact analysis before they were exposed to the cold winds of competition with most developed industrial powers. On this particular question UGT articulated the development *avant-la-lettre* (1980) within the ETUC of Interregional Development Committees, with France in 1983 (Catalunya and southern France with Force Ouvrière and CFDT) and with Portugal in 1987 (Galicia and northern Portugal with UGT-P).

Summing up, Iberian trade unions were very positive about the EEC and had a clear understanding of why there was no alternative as a general political objective, even though they were seriously concerned about the likely direct impact on their economies. But this was also the main reason why they wished to become extremely active in the construction of the ETUC, although they were still only on the margins. Indeed the lack of acceptance of two important confederations such as CCOO and CGTP also limited the role that UGT, ELA and UGT-P could have played within the ETUC to promote their positions.

2.2. The accession of CCOO (1990) to the ETUC and the rejection of CGTP (1995): conditions and controversies

On 14 December 1990, the ETUC met in Rome in the context of a European summit, at which UGT and ELA recommended the accession of CCOO. This was approved with the sole abstentions of Force Ouvrière and CFDT. As soon as they were accepted CCOO issued a communiqué prepared by Juan Moreno, the new person responsible for international affairs, in which the new member put forward its support for the Stielenburg Report, but also

requested that this enlargement of the ETUC open the doors to CGTP and also to central and eastern European trade unions. If CCOO enjoyed strong links with CGTP for obvious reasons, it also enjoyed direct relations with trade unions that were members of the WFTU, in particular with the French CGT. Such a privileged relationship did not encourage CCOO to accept the demand for permanent structural work with both communist-led trade unions at the European level (Moreno 1999: 255–270).

In fact, the acceptance of the CCOO request ultimately came about because of the change in the position of the DGB and UGT in relation to the stabilisation of Spanish democracy. No doubt Ernest Breit did not share Vetter's view and informally withdrew his veto, agreeing to meet the newly-appointed secretary general of CCOO, Antonio Gutierrez, in June 1988 during his European tour of trade unions. Within UGT the new person responsible for international relations, Manuel Bonmati, also took a more receptive position because the tense relations between the two trade unions relaxed after UGT had stabilised its domestic position at a similar level to that of CCOO. More importantly, UGT needed – and obtained – CCOO's support in its increasing confrontation with the PSOE government, due to the neoliberal thrust that prime minister Felipe González had given to its economic policy. This confrontation reached a point of no return with the general strike of 14 December 1988 that UGT and CCOO called against the government's labour market 'reforms' aimed at tackling youth unemployment. This marked not only the end of the PSOE's social democratic strategy based on building up the welfare state on a neo-corporatist basis in cooperation with UGT, but also – more structurally – the end of the long relationship between UGT and the PSOE. UGT started its emancipation from its partner political party, which was subordinated to the government, before taking its own road as a pillar of trade union opposition to government policies (Vega García 2011: 217, chap. 9).²³

For this reason it became strategically fundamental to have the support of Gutierrez who had already set the Spanish Communist Party at a distance in his quest for autonomy. This quest for autonomy is illustrated by CCOO's decision at its 1991 Congress to remove the clause forbidding international affiliation, and the start, two years later, of exploratory efforts to join ICFTU. This indeed transpired in Brussels on 25–26 June 1996 at the XVth ICFTU congress, also with the full support of UGT. Such a decision seemed obvious after the fall of the Berlin Wall and ETUC membership, as most of its allies in the ETUC were already members of ICFTU.

This was not the case with regard to CGTP, however, which maintained its neutrality and had not joined any international federation, even when it maintained its quest for ETUC membership at its Vth Congress in 1986. From that moment onwards CGTP received indirect support from President Delors, who several times between 1986 and 1990 even met its international relations official, José Luís Judas, on a private basis. Delors asserted that the ETUC had to achieve broader representation and overcome political barriers and for this reason he rejected monopoly of representation and put pressure on the Portuguese Prime Minister, Anibal Cavaco Silva, to make it possible for CGTP to appoint two of the four representatives to whom the trade unions were entitled in the European Economic and Social Committee. CGTP quickly appointed Vasco Cal, who represented it for nearly 14 years in this EC institution (Carvalho da Silva 2007: 352). Such participation in Community institutions was included in the application submitted to Gabaglio

23. The General Strike. See Méndez *et al.* (2013).

by Manuel Carvalho da Silva on 28 November 1992, when CGTP made its second official application. Between 1978 and 1995, UGT-P Secretary General José Manuel Torres Couto had succeeded in blocking the adhesion of its competitor to the ETUC. He even used the exclusion of Judas from his position in CGTP due to pressure from PCP hardliners to make his case, managing to delay the final talks until 28 October 1994, when Gabaglio ultimately pushed Torres Couto to publically sponsor the adhesion of CGTP to the ETUC, which took place in January 1995 (Costa 2000: 21–24). The only piece of the Iberian jigsaw still missing was USO, which joined in 2005, as a result of the international agreement to merge ITUC with WCL. In this way, the European affiliates of WCL joined the ETUC, overcoming the enduring opposition of UGT.

2.3. From the SEA to the Treaty of Maastricht: the input of Iberian trade unions

This convergence of UGT with CCOO was also translated into a common thrust towards European integration in various fields in which the socialist trade union had been active until the adhesion of CCOO. Thus in 1991 a new interregional trade union committee was developed in the south of Spain and Portugal (Alentejo and Extremadura) and a year later in the north with France (the Basque Country, Navarra and Aragon with Aquitaine), both of which also included CCOO.

The fundamental issue for both trade unions after the adhesion of CCOO was the Treaty of Maastricht, which UGT supported. UGT's analysis was extremely well informed and considered that Maastricht was not just about monetary union, but also other political and socio-economic objectives. For UGT, responsibility for the crisis of trust and obstruction of treaty ratification was the result of the European decision-making process and was the 'exclusive responsibility of national governments', which had not launched a broad debate or informed their citizens about the real stakes behind the European construction. Manuel Bonmati, new head of UGT's international department, took the view that a few people were holding the European project hostage behind technical explanations of what Maastricht was about. In this way they generated more rejection than support in relationship of this decisive step toward European unity, as demonstrated by the Danish Referendum. Such rejection came from an exclusive focus on convergence programmes towards the nominal criteria established by the Monetary Union, which in the Spanish case went further than what was requested by European authorities. Workers were told that they were imposed from Brussels, when for the ETUC it was clear that this was a merely instrumental use of Europe in order to apply neoliberal policies which made workers pay for the economic adjustment, as was happening in Spain.

This paralysis in the ratification process prevented the application of the social action programmes devised at Maastricht, even when there were still elements in the social protocol that were protected by the unanimity vote that the Spanish government had also defended. The solution put forward by UGT was simply to make a more flexible interpretation of the Maastricht criteria, in order to achieve real economic convergence upon monetary convergence, and to make it public that national economic policies were not unavoidable technical decisions but political choices made exclusively by national governments. Aside from Economic and Monetary Union, UGT insisted on completing and developing more social (regional cohesion and coherent social policies) and political integration (more democratic control corresponding to an external and security policy with

higher solidarity taxation) with the aim of eliminating inequalities and creating employment.²⁴

The UGT position was extremely clear: the neoliberal application of the Maastricht Treaty was a contingent decision of Spain's Social Democratic government, with which UGT was now in open war after a second general strike had been convoked by both trade unions in May 1992 on the government's decision to reduce unemployment benefits despite Spain's very high unemployment rate. This first stage of what became a sustained development of trade union unity was also reflected in the critical support that CCOO gave to the Maastricht Treaty, leading to a major break with its political ally, the United Left coalition created by, among others, the PCE and former PSOE leaders. Already at the first ETUC congress in which CCOO participated (February 1991 in Luxembourg) Antonio Gutierrez, still a member of the executive committee of the PCE, and Salce Elvira, later representative of the critical sector of the Communist Party within CCOO, publicly defended without reservation the view that European political unity was an integral part of a left-wing project to prevent the EEC from being turned into a Europe of businessmen. This clear bet on political union was paralysed by the resistance of nation-states to transfers of sovereignty to new institutions endowed with democratic representation and accountability.

When the Maastricht Treaty was discussed and negotiated at the end of 1991 CCOO followed the ETUC position of a critical approval without much dissent. The ratification of the Treaty by the Spanish Parliament, however, created a durable internal break within, and between, United Left and CCOO, with the resignation as IU whip of the man who represented the majority of CCOO in IU, CCOO leader Nicolas Sartorius. Together with Gutierrez, a few months earlier Sartorius had unsuccessfully advocated the dissolution of the Spanish Communist Party into the new United Left. Now, both leaders defended ratification of the Treaty in line with the Catalan correspondent of United Left (*Iniciativa per Catalunya*) which dissolved the Communist Party of Catalunya (PSUC) to become an eco-socialist party. On the contrary, the PCE majority that dominated IU took a euro-sceptic and sovereignist U-turn, pushing for its rejection and requesting a referendum. This debate was also taken up in CCOO but it was clearly defeated in the Confederal Council vote which approved the Treaty with a critical yes, related not so much to political-union aspects of the Treaty, which they favoured, but to the high risks of monetary convergence without budgetary resources for policies for further social and economic cohesion (Moreno 1999: 299–308). No doubt, this battle for the Maastricht Treaty marked a historical break for CCOO from its major political ally and pushed it in search for more autonomy from political parties and closer cooperation with UGT than in the past, in particular at the European level within the ETUC. This political break deepened during the second part of the 1990s, causing Juan Moreno to conclude that at the European level a convergence with the communist and post-communist left was impossible, leaving the European socialist parties as preferential strategic counterparts for trade unions.²⁵

The break by UGT and CCOO from their historical political allies contrasted with Portugal where UGT-P and CGTP maintained strong links with political parties on European issues. Thus, the secretary General of UGT-P, Torres Couto, became an MEP for the

24. FFLC, 002112-003, Ordinary Confederal Committee of December 1992, Activity Report between November 1991 and October 1992 by Manuel Bonmati.

25. See Moreno (1997). I would like to thank the director of the Historical Archives of CCOO, José Babiano, for providing me with a copy of this document.

Socialist Party in 1989. His number two and substitute from 1995 at the head of UGTP, Joao Proença, was not only a PS MP from 1987 but also a prominent member of its national directorate, accumulating European experience as a member of the EESC for a number of years. It is no surprise that on Maastricht the UGTP line was very similar to that agreed at the ETUC, contrary to CGTP, which opposed the Treaty and recommended its non-ratification by Portugal unless a referendum was organised. In this case, the opposition was not just linked to the Treaty itself but also to the attempt by the Cavaco government to use ratification as an excuse for a revision of the Portuguese Constitution. Nevertheless, this was not presented as an anti-European position, because CGTP reasserted its belief in a European institutional framework to regulate single-market dynamics, which deepened the social and economic imbalances in Europe. It was in this sense unambiguous when they declared that ‘the EEC should become the accelerating thrust of economic development’. This implied not just the abandonment of the ‘monetarist’ policies at the basis of austerity and mass unemployment; more decisively, it called for direct and unambiguous support for the Delors II package proposals for economic acceleration through an increase in the European funds for infrastructure, education, training and the environment, coupled with direct implementation of the Social Chapter. For the largest Portuguese trade union there was a need for cooperation and unity with the European trade union movement to carry on the struggle at the European level in order to protect not just Europe but also Portuguese national interests, which in their opinion were not well protected by the Maastricht Treaty.²⁶

Indeed, this was not an anti-EEC manifesto, even if CGTP concurred with the PCP in asking for a referendum. The argumentation and general reasons for rejection were obviously determined from the domestic debate and the need to find a balance between the different sensibilities within CGTP (communists, socialists and Christians). The specificity of this position was maintained even after the accession of CGTP to the ETUC. During the participation of the Portuguese trade union in its first ETUC congress in May 1995, the CGTP delegation headed by Carvalho and Lança also argued against the central document of the congress because it defended a federalist logic and the creation, as a consequence, of a multi-speed Europe. In coherence with their position, not all countries would be disposed to accept the consequences of asking that all decisions be taken by qualified majority and not by unanimity (Costa 2000: 25).

3. From the periphery of accession to the heart of European commitments (1995–2013)

The May 1995 resolution of the ETUC’s Brussels Congress was ultimately defeated in its federalist version, even when one of the closer allies of CGTP within the ETUC, CCOO, had voted on favour of the federalist logic as a way out of the European imbalance created by the implementation of Maastricht. Thus, the resolution ‘for a strong, democratic and open Europe based on solidarity’ was actually what the ETUC secretariat, led by Gabaglio, put forward in order to balance the political agreement signed in Maastricht with the creation of a Social Union. The Spaniards were very much behind Gabaglio, and they were reinforced when Antonio Gutierrez was appointed vice-president of the ETUC, after having agreed to a

²⁶. CGTP, 7th Congreso of CGTP-IN, *Relatório de Actividades*, 1989–1993.

rotation system with the new secretary general of UGT, Cándido Méndez, who had replaced Nicolás Redondo one year earlier. Both trade unions used that privileged position in order to play a predominant role in the functioning of the ETUC, which they have maintained until the present.²⁷

In the course of ten years, Iberian trade unions progressively came from the periphery to the centre of the organisation, symbolised by the nomination of Cándido Méndez as President of the ETUC in 2003. This was also confirmed by the fact that Helena André of UGTP was promoted to the position of deputy secretary general, the first time a woman had assumed such an important position. She ensured the continuity of the ETUC with the previous Gabaglio secretariat until 2009, when she was appointed Minister of Labour in the PS government formed by José Socrates. If this was not sufficient proof, when Méndez's four-year term came to an end, the Seville Congress of 2007 created the post of first vice-president, which gave him the possibility to substitute the President when necessary, but more importantly to participate with full rights in the Management Committee until 2011.

That same year, during the Athens Congress, it was the turn of the Secretary General of CCOO, Ignacio Fernández Toxo, to be nominated as President of the ETUC, for a period of four years, maintaining a very long and stable presence of Spanish trade union leaders at the forefront of the ETUC. Such stability was helped by the fact that for nearly ten years CCOO maintained Javier Doz as person responsible for international affairs, after the exit of Juan Moreno from this position. Doz was a previous leader of CCOO as former secretary general in the education section, whereas Toxo had been secretary general of the metal section, thus giving them European experience.

It is no exaggeration to say that the majority of Spanish and Portuguese trade unions converged, in line with Gabaglio, on the kind of ETUC they wanted. They supported him very closely in his attempts from the Brussels congress onwards to build a supranational European trade union, which would become a true supranational European actor with competencies of representation and negotiation at the European level. In this, they opposed trade unions who held that the ETUC should remain a coordinator of European trade unions, playing the role of an efficient lobbyist of the European institutions. When Manuel Bonmati reviewed Gabaglio's term of office, the only major failure he found was that the ETUC had not managed to define a common European trade union identity. Indeed such a challenge became even more complex for the new ETUC secretary general, John Monks due to the central and eastern European enlargement, even though the ETUC had opened its doors to central and eastern European trade unions as early as 1999. Moreover, managing to define a common trade union identity was already very difficult within Spain and Portugal, where the wounds of dictatorship and the Cold War were still felt, despite the increasing convergence and common actions of trade unions, which had durably weakened, but not completely severed, their links with rival political parties.

Reading the concluding speech of ETUC President Cándido Méndez at the ETUC Congress in Seville, one cannot avoid being surprised by his pro-integration faith in favour of supporting every measure for more Europe. Thus, the position of Spanish trade unionists was very much in line with the public support for the Constitutional Treaty approved by the ETUC. Such pro-European political integration from the standpoint of UGT and CCOO was

27. Manuel Bonmati, 'Presentación', in UGT, Resoluciones aprobadas en el 10º congreso de la CES (Praga del 26 al 29 de Mayo de 2003).

confirmed in their common position in favour of ratification of the Constitutional Treaty in Spain, which was the object of a positive referendum in February 2005. After the defeat of the Constitution in France and the Netherlands, the political line defended by Méndez was the preservation of the Charter of Fundamental Rights in order to make it binding on all parties, as actually happened in the Lisbon Treaty.

If there is an important issue that Spanish and Portuguese trade unions brought to the agenda of the ETUC it was its international development in various parts of the world. While for Spanish trade unions the natural projection of the ETUC was in Latin America and the Mediterranean, the Portuguese favoured support for trade unionists in Africa. In the speech accompanying the Seville Manifesto, 'For an offensive on wages – towards equality', Cándido Méndez also underlined a new task, which in the past was rather assigned to ICFTU, namely, the development of autonomous and direct relations between the ETUC and other parts of the world.²⁸ This also led to firm support from most Iberian trade unions, except CGTP, to the merger of ICFTU with the WCL in November 2006 to create the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC). In this new step towards adapting the ETUC to the challenges of globalisation with an active policy on international relations, senior Iberian trade unionists also played a key role in ETUC contacts with the World Social Forum. This development of international relations was also logical because the EU was progressively developing not just a trade and cooperation agenda, but also a foreign and security policy agenda that Spanish trade unions were very keen to support as a form of institutional development. This was less straightforward from the standpoint of the Portuguese trade unions, and in particular CGTP, which remained one of the few trade unions in the ETUC that did not adhere to the new ITUC, preferring to maintain its cooperation with WFTU and preserve its non-affiliation to any worldwide trade union organisation.²⁹

By 2013, the position of the Iberian trade unions towards the ETUC and European integration since the start of the economic crisis could be summed up by some of the public positions expressed by Ignacio Fernández Toxo as President of the ETUC and his special adviser for ETUC questions, Javier Doz. Considering the rejection of the budgetary Treaty by the ETUC, the bottom-line for the Spanish trade union movement was a refoundation of the EU, which is in crisis as a result of a lack of institutionalisation. Such institutionalisation is not just reflected in the social and democratic deficits, but also directly concerns the absence of supra-national instruments of economic intervention, such a common tax policy at EU level. One example would be a financial transactions tax to feed a higher European budget, which would be implemented together with a new mandate for the European Central Bank. This deficit has a major cause, namely the hegemony of neoliberal precepts in EU policies, one terrible consequence of which is the continuing upsurge of nationalism. For the President of the ETUC the aborted Constitutional Treaty, supported by the ETUC, would have made possible a different treatment of the crisis. The central problem is the lack of institutionalisation of the European project and the EU political institutions play a deficient role in solving these problems.

It is this lack of effectiveness on the part of European institutions that has enabled German hegemony to prosper, with the collaboration of France, putting national interests and neoliberal ideas before the Union. This Franco-German axis has resulted in the approval

²⁸. Presentación por Manuel Bonmati y Apertura del Congreso por Cándido Méndez, UGT, XI Congreso de la CES, A la ofensiva por una Europa social, Solidaria y Sostenible, 2007.

²⁹. On this debate see Lança (2007).

of economic governance tools whose common philosophy involves thwarting labour rights and social policies by weakening trade union power, with the explicit aim of competing in global markets with Asia, setting the EU on a downward spiral. In fact, this path will only damage the EU's legitimacy because European citizens will see it as responsible for the destruction of the European Welfare State. The only alternative that the new President of the ETUC found was to draft a new Constitutional Charter on the basis of a new European Social Contract (Toxo 2012). This demand was publicly requested on 7 December 2011 by various trade union leaders in the ETUC (CCOO, UGT, DGB, CGIL, CGT, CFDT, FGTB, and CSC), but not by the ETUC as such, showing the lack of unanimity within the ETUC on this position for a new Treaty in a more federalist direction, as pointed out by the leader of CCOO. This position was discussed in February 2012 at the ETUC winter school in Copenhagen and approved by the ETUC executive in its communication on a 'Social Compact for Europe' in June 2012. This rather added a social protocol to the existing Economic and Monetary Union, even though for Toxo, the real solution would be a democratic Constitution for refounding Europe.

However, this depends, according to Javier Doz, on the balance of forces within the European Union, which implies the creation of a true left-wing alternative at the European level that cannot be guaranteed by social democrats alone. This is corroborated not just by the 'sad role played by social democrats in Spain, Portugal and Greece before being expelled from power', but also by the so-called 'Third Way', which was dominated ideologically by neoliberalism. Given that such an eventuality is not clear or imminent, European trade unions must count on their own strength and their capacity to mobilise other social forces, while striving to promote a European political alternative involving non-neoliberal political forces (Doz 2012). This requires a more decisive thrust in the direction of a European trade union movement, including the possibility of European actions such as the historic strike in southern European countries that are members of the ETUC on 14 November 2012. After tramping the European road through various stops for the past thirty years, the leaders of the Iberian trade unions managed to reach the driving seat of the ETUC. Looking back at their personal trajectories, including the cold prison cells that most of its leaders experienced in their fight for democracy and social rights, helps us to understand why they have been among the staunchest advocates of a federalist project pushed forward by a European social movement led by an ETUC in which they have vested the highest expectations.

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Chapter 7

Swedish trade unions and the ETUC

Erik Bengtsson

This chapter builds on previous literature, as well as interviews with key union actors to give an overview of Swedish unions' work within the ETUC since 1973. Concerning this historical framework, the most fundamental study to date is the labour historian Klaus Misgeld's 1997 book *Den fackliga europavägen* (The unions' road to Europe), the definitive archival study of Swedish unions and European union cooperation in the period 1945–1991. The period after 1991 is covered in the present chapter on the basis of interviews with union officials, trade union publications and the recent literature on unions and Europeanisation and globalisation. The chapter is structured as follows. Section 1 outlines the national context, with three characteristics that, I would argue, are necessary to understand the relationship between Swedish unions and the ETUC. Section 2 discusses the developments from the start in 1973 up to the mid-1980s. Section 3 depicts the development since the mid-1980s. Sections 4 and 5 discuss the developments since the 1990s thematically: first the practical and organisational issues, then the policy issues. Section 6 concludes.

1. National context

1.1. Three confederations

There are three trade union confederations in Sweden: LO, TCO and Saco. LO organise blue-collar workers, TCO white-collar workers and Saco professionals. Historically, LO (formed in 1898) was the by far largest and most important confederation, but in the past twenty years or so its relative importance has decreased, as TCO

(formed 1944) and Saco (formed 1947) have grown and LO membership has shrunk due to economic restructuring – the increasing weight of white-collar employees and academics in the economy – as well as decreasing unionisation. The share of union members belonging to an LO union decreased from 81 per cent in 1950 to 63 per cent in 1980 and 48 per cent in 2008 (author's calculations from statistics in Golden *et al.* 2009, complemented by newer statistics from the organisations' annual reports). LO is still the largest confederation, but not so dominant as it once was.

LO and TCO are cofounding members of the ETUC, while Saco did not join until 1996. Before that its membership was blocked by the competing union TCO; TCO and Saco both organise groups of employees such as teachers (interview ÅZ). Saco instead worked within the European Confederation of Independent Trade Unions (CESI), which was formed in 1990. As long as they could not join the ETUC, Saco figured that they could find international cooperation and influence in CESI instead. However, since joining the ETUC in 1997 – the opposition within TCO to a Saco membership had withered away – Saco have quickly integrated and now it seems a very long time ago that TCO ever blocked their membership. According to some analysts (Bieler and Lindberg 2008: 209) the Saco unions are today more positive and proactive than their counterparts – especially from the LO – when it comes to European integration. This reflects the typical class pattern in attitudes to European integration; the better educated are more supportive of the integration process (Fligstein 2008). In the LO there has traditionally been more euroscepticism than in the other unions; before the 1994 referendum only six of the then 21 unions within the LO supported Swedish EU membership; one union was against and 14 were neutral (Lundgren Rydén 2000: 242). Blue-collar workers were much more likely to vote 'no' than white-collar workers or professionals. Among LO members 37 per cent voted yes, 61 per cent no (Lundgren Rydén: 255–56). TCO and Saco members were and are more EU positive (Holmberg 2013).

1.2. Outsiderness and scepticism

Sweden did not join the European Union until 1995 and traditionally the Swedish labour movement was rather skeptical towards European integration. This skepticism was based on two factors in particular: the cherished neutrality policy in international relations and a focus on the national welfare state (cf. Miles 2001). The classic expression of this stance towards European integration comes from the famous speech by then Social Democratic Prime Minister Tage Erlander at the Metal Workers' Union congress in 1961, three weeks after Great Britain had applied for membership of the EEC (Bergqvist 2009). Erlander was negative towards Swedish EEC membership because of Sweden's neutrality policy, free trade and economic policy. Erlander's skepticism towards European integration was famously expressed in the 'three Socialism': the EEC was perceived as conservative, capitalist and Catholic (cf. Lundgren Rydén 2000: 25; Miles 2001; Larsson 2008: 177). This parallels the attitudes in Nordic societies in general, which have been 'reluctant Europeans' (Lundgren Rydén 2000: 23). Similar opinions have been present in the British labour movement as well, as Hyman (in this volume) shows. When a Swedish trade union official (Björn Pettersson) went to Brussels in 1982 to become deputy general secretary of the ETUC, he experienced that the European colleagues were still doubtful about the Swedes' commitment due to Erlander's speech in 1961 (Misgeld 1997: 382, 170).

In the postwar period Swedes, not the least in the labour movement, often found their social model superior to those of other Europeans (cf. Misgeld 1997: 344; Larsson 2008: 175–76). The Swedish unions' positions in European cooperation are clearly shaped by the unique Nordic labour market model that they take such pride in, as well as the fact that the country did not join the EU until 1995. We must also emphasise the particular interests of the Swedish unions in protecting the labour market model/industrial relations system, minimum wage setting and selective incentives for membership. As Vandaele and Glassner (2012: 7) observe, 'the specific characteristics of European industrial relations regimes influence unionists' interests and strategies'. This is true in the Swedish case: their high opinion about their own labour market model clearly shapes their involvement in union cooperation and policy at the European level. Misgeld's (1997: 49) conclusion in 1997 was that 'the [Swedish] union movement's attitude to European issues ... has traditionally been restrained, not to say ungenerous' (cf. Larsson 2012: 155). In the 1950s and 1960s the Swedes were mostly interested in free trade issues when it comes to international cooperation (Misgeld 1997: 29). Although the Swedes' interest in transnational cooperation became wider and deeper in the 1970s and 1980s, they have never become friends of the idea of deep transnational integration. Instead, the Swedes often want to keep the important decision-making on a national level, and defend their own famous labour market model (Vandaele and Glassner 2012). The Nordic unionists, says one study, prefer 'exporting their own [Nordic] approach to industrial relations rather than learning from others' (Larsson *et al.* 2012: 46; cf. Vandaele and Glassner 2012: 21). Lovén (2012) in another article goes so far as to say that 'since the ETUC was formed in 1973 the overarching goal for the Nordic trade union movement's engagement in the organisation has, typically enough, been to safeguard the Nordic social partners and collective agreement model' (Cf. Svensson and Jacobsson 2009: 16; Andersen 2006). The Swedish and Nordic unions are typically less interested in deeper transnational cooperation than their southern European counterparts (Vandaele and Glassner 2012; Larsson *et al.* 2012). This issue of the defensive or reactive character of Swedish unions' European engagement will be a recurring theme in this chapter. It is worth noting, however, that there are sectoral variations within Sweden; typically, the metal workers – active in an international industry – are more engaged (cf. Blomqvist and Murhem 2003: 163f; Andersen 2006; Furåker and Bengtsson 2013).

Furthermore, as I discuss below, the Swedish labour market model has over the past two to three decades become more similar to European counterparts (Baccaro and Howell 2011). From 2000 to 2010 union density decreased from 81 to 71 per cent (Kjellberg 2013), and the political influence of unions decreased, albeit from a very high level (Lindvall 2012). If the position of Swedish unions is weakened at home, it is likely that their interest in European cooperation will grow (cf. Bieler and Lindberg 2008).

1.3. Nordic alliances

As discussed above, the Swedes have historically been 'reluctant Europeans'. The relationship with the neighbouring Nordic countries is more straightforward, also with regard to trade union issues. The strength of the bonds between the Nordic unions in the ETUC go all the way back to the confederation's foundation: before the founding conference of the ETUC in 1973, the Nordic participants had already founded the Council of Nordic Trade

Unions (CNTU), in Oslo in March 1972.¹ The purpose was to bring the Nordic unions closer together. The union leaders saw that international cooperation was becoming more important and that together they would have a stronger voice (see Isakson 2012 for a history of the CNTU). This organisation, with its head office in Stockholm, is still important in coordinating the Nordic unions' work within the ETUC and on European issues. CNTU works in two main arenas, with different functions. In representing Nordic unions on the Nordic level, it has a mandate to act politically vis-à-vis, for example, the Nordic Council and the Nordic Council of Ministers. On the European level, the CNTU is more of an arena for meetings and consultations for the unions (interview LB). The Nordic unions prepare before ETUC meetings with common meetings arranged by the CNTU. In this way the Nordic unions coordinate their action on the European level to increase their influence. This type of Nordic coordination and common preparation before European meetings is not unique to the confederal level, but is also used at the sectoral level, for example among the metalworkers (cf. Thörnqvist 2008: 939–941) and transport workers (Rönngren *et al.* 2008: 146f).

The Nordics as a bloc have also shared some representation within the ETUC. In the 1970s and 1980s as an informal rule one of the ETUC's deputy general secretaries came from one of the Nordic countries: the Swede Sven-Erik Sterner was followed by the Norwegian Ivar Naalsund (1979–82), who was followed by the Swede Björn Pettersson (1982–85).

It is typical for the Nordic labour market regimes to have little state intervention but strong social partners and high collective bargaining coverage (cf. Dølvik 2008; Eldring and Alsos 2012). The trade unions are very positive to this system and this fact shapes their actions in the European arena, as well: typically the Nordic unions are not interested in policies that imply greater state intervention in the labour market, such as statutory minimum wages. We will see in this chapter that this has become an issue time and time again for the Swedes within the ETUC.

2. The 1970s and 1980s

As explained above, Swedish unions' attitudes and commitment to European integration and European trade union cooperation have traditionally been minimalist in terms of transfers of policy competence to the European level. In the 1950s and 1960s LO was an active member of the European Regional within the OECD trade union cooperation, but not a member that wanted deeper European integration. Misgeld (1997) claims that there was something of a turnaround in LO's attitudes around 1970, when it realised that European integration was deepening beyond what had been foreseen and that a better form of European trade union cooperation was therefore needed. Both LO and TCO took part in both the preparations for and the founding congress of the ETUC in 1972–73. They were represented by a TCO officer at the meeting in Luxembourg in October 1972. At the meeting with higher representatives in November 1972, which decided to hold a constituent congress for the new organisation in Brussels in February 1973, three LO representatives – including its secretary Rune Molin – took part.

1. The founding members of CNTU were six confederations from four countries: LO from Denmark, SAK/FFC and TOC from Finland, LO from Norway, and LO and TCO from Sweden. Today CNTU has 17 members, including confederations from the Faroe Islands, Greenland and Iceland. Saco joined in 1996.

During the formation of the ETUC, then LO chairman Arne Geijer, a convinced internationalist, was quite active and involved in several coalitions seeking to shape the organisation. The British TUC and the Nordic delegates were united in wanting an open ETUC, for example, not including the anti-communist code word ‘free’ in the name of the new organisation and also welcoming Christian unions as members. The Nordics also obviously had a special interest in welcoming as many unions from EFTA countries as possible into the ETUC, so that the organisation would not become exclusively focused on the EC (Misgeld 1997: 133, 152). When it came to welcoming Catholic and communist unions, the Nordic stance was probably due to a preference to have as broad an organisation as possible (cf. Dølvik, in this volume). The Nordics and the TUC also agreed on the need to focus more on central confederations within the ETUC and less on industry unions, in contrast to the Germans who wanted to put more emphasis on sectoral cooperation.

The Swedish unions’ position within the ETUC was not very strong; coming from an EFTA country, their position was weak in two ways. One, it was difficult for EFTA unions to make themselves heard within the ETUC, and two, it was difficult for the ETUC to have an influence on EFTA (Misgeld 1997: 145, 170–74). The Swedish unions were annoyed that the EFTA countries were ‘forgotten’ within the ETUC. A telling anecdote in this regard is that twice in the 1970s LO general secretary Rune Molin, an ETUC board member, protested against the lack of interpreters for Nordic languages at board meetings (Misgeld 1997: 386). There was also skepticism towards the ETUC within LO; with union officials highly skeptical regarding the ETUC’s efficiency and some considering the ETUC in the 1970s to be a ‘yellow organisation’, in the sense that it was too close to the Brussels elite (Misgeld 1997: 385). The typical Swedish attitude to the ETUC in this time was pragmatic, characterised by a reluctance to embrace grandiose goals and an emphasis on ‘realism’. As Dølvik (this volume) points out, the Swedish LO was more skeptical about European integration during this time than their Nordic colleagues. LO and TCO mostly wanted the ETUC to act as a distributor of information, assisting national unions, and not so much as an actor in its own right (Misgeld 1997: 174). Dølvik (1997: 172) makes a distinction between “Euro-pragmatists”, mainly seeing the ETUC as a means to improving transnational union coordination and counterpower, and “Euro-idealists”, mainly seeing the ETUC as an instrument in constructing a unified, supranational Europe.’ The Swedish unions are an archetypical case of Euro-pragmatists in this sense. Below I shall discuss four issues on which LO, by far the largest Swedish union confederation during the period, disagreed with the ETUC’s approach during the 1970s and 1980s: the European days of action, working time reduction as employment policy, European social policy and wage restraint strategies.

The first example of the Swedish unions’ coldness towards ETUC initiatives is the so-called European day of action, initiated in 1978. The European day of action is supposed to be a Europe-wide day of strikes, demonstrations and political activities by unions. However, in 1978 the Swedes were unimpressed by this idea, which did not fit their idea of being ‘constructive’, and did not take part in 1978 (Misgeld 1997: 203). The prototypical Swedish attitude on this topic is that union strength does not derive from demonstrations but from more mundane day-to-day work (Misgeld 1997: 336). This illustrates some of the cultural and methodological differences between Swedish trade unions and their European colleagues. When Swedish trade unions had a very strong position in both the labour market and politics they were reluctant to strike and demonstrate (other than on 1 May). A recent political science analysis speculates that the current weakening of the unions might make Swedish industrial relations more conflictual and increase the likelihood of political strikes

(Lindvall 2012). In a sense, such a development would make Swedish unions more alike their ETUC colleagues.

The second point of disagreement was on LO's most important issue within the ETUC at that time, employment policy. LO disagreed with the ETUC's position that working time reduction could be an employment-enhancing reform (Misgeld 1997: 214; Svensson and Jacobsson 2009: 69–70). As with many issues in international trade union cooperation, this has been on the agenda for a long time and with the same divisions of opinion: at the ETUC congress in Brussels in 1995 the Nordic unions still voiced the same dissatisfaction with the ETUC's pro-working time reduction policy (Dølvik 1997: 410).

The third issue on which the Swedish LO found itself disagreeing with many unions in the ETUC in the late 1970s and 1980s was the development towards a European transnational social policy, which LO did not want (Misgeld 1997: 227). Integration and harmonisation were seen as favouring a lowering of standards. LO opposed the Commission president Jacques Delors' ambition of getting rid of the national veto in social policy decisions within the EC, even though of course Sweden was not a member at this time.

The fourth issue was wage policy, as discussed in the Val Duchesse dialogue. The first document produced by the social partners ETUC and UNICE within the Val Duchesse dialogue, initiated by Delors, contained a statement in favour of real wage increases lower than productivity increases, to create jobs (Misgeld 1997: 238–39). LO disagreed vehemently with this policy prescription. At this point the Swedish unions were themselves not involved in the Val Duchesse talks as Sweden was not a member of the EC. At the ETUC board meeting of December 1987 it was made clear that they would anyway be allowed to have a representative in the talks, more specifically in the microeconomic working group, after advancing this demand at the board meeting in June (Svensson and Jacobsson 2009: 7). Before this, LO had attempted to exert influence by writing to the ETUC and clarifying their positions. Generally, LO proposed tougher formulations on unemployment policy, economic policy, public investment, social justice, consumers' rights and other issues. But it also stressed that issues of pay and working hours should be handled on a national level and not by the ETUC (Misgeld 1997: 244–25).

We have seen that in the 1970s and 1980s LO often found itself disagreeing with ETUC colleagues and with the ETUC's stated policies. It is not surprising that in the debate on the wage policy recommendations from the Val Duchesse dialogue French *Force Ouvrière* chairman André Bergeron claimed that the EFTA unions, and especially the Scandinavians, were brakes on the process of European social dialogue (Misgeld 1997: 241). However, during the second half of the 1980s LO turned around on the issue of European cooperation and European integration. This will be discussed in the next section.

3. The Delors revival and the 1990s

During Jacques Delors' leadership of the European Commission, European integration moved forward by leaps and bounds, especially with regard to the common market (cf. Jabko 2006). However, Delors also had strong social policy ambitions for the European Community and reached out to the trade unions. During the so-called 'Delors revival' of the second half of the 1980s, Swedish unions did warm to European integration and became more involved in the ETUC (interview GK). LO's Rune Molin, responsible for European issues at the organisation, explained in a Swedish newspaper interview in 1988 that

‘the EC as an organisation previously has just been a lot of talk. But now there’s a new situation with concrete issues and quick decisions’ (quoted in Svensson and Jacobsson 2009: 8). This is telling with regard to LO’s attitude. The influence of the increased activity in Brussels on Swedish unions is parallel to what happened in two other Eurosceptic national union movements, the Norwegians (Dølvik, in this volume) and the British (Hyman, in this volume). That the ETUC’s sixth congress of May 1988 was held in the Swedish capital Stockholm also acted as a catalyst for the specific increase in interest among the Swedes (Misgeld 1997: 244–45). Delors was a guest at this conference and his speech, encouraging European unions to take part in the social dialogue and the integration project, succeeded in increasing enthusiasm for the European project among the Swedish unions (cf. Dølvik, in this volume).

An expression of the increasing weight attached to European issues by Swedish trade unions was the foundation of their Brussels office in 1989. The Brussels office is an important source of information and contacts with, for example, the European Parliament for the Swedish unionists working with European issues; one former Saco EU/ETUC officer claimed to have been in daily contact with the Brussels office in his years at Saco (interview ÅZ). After the Swedish unions had been included in the Val Duchesse process, they felt that due to a lack of information they were in a weak position. That was an important reason to start the Brussels office, which is an information and coordination centre rather than an agent in itself (Svensson and Jacobsson 2009: 8). The staff at the Brussels office is rather small: most of the time it has consisted of one head of office, one assistant and typically a temporarily posted union official from some Swedish union’s Stockholm office. The temporary postings typically last for six months and the idea is to give more trade unionists in Sweden insights into how the EU works. The founding of the Brussels office met with some skepticism from the ETUC secretariat, who were unhappy that the Swedes were more willing to spend money on having their own office in Brussels than on pooling resources to expand the ETUC offices (Svensson and Jacobsson 2009; Dølvik 1997: 438). However, among the Swedish unions the Brussels office is very much appreciated as a source of information from Brussels,² as well as a coordinator.

In 1991, when Sweden got its first centre-right government in nine years, LO’s EC officer wrote a memo for its board on which recommendation to make to LO’s members before the referendum on Swedish EC membership. The memo begins: ‘The social democratic dominance of Sweden’s postwar period is over. The labour movement will continue to be the biggest political force in the country, but without being in a dominant position’ (quoted in Misgeld 1997: 318). The memo also pointed to the increasing importance of international trade and multinational companies as a challenge to the labour movement. Hence, the turnaround on European issues was motivated not only by positive factors – good experiences of European trade union cooperation – but also by negative factors in the shape of increasing weakness at home. This conforms well with the literature on trade unions and international cooperation, which says that unions become more interested in international cooperation when they are weakened at home (Ross and Martin 1999; Magnusson and Murhem 2009; Vandaele and Glassner 2012; cf. also Bailey 2005).

2. Nyberg (2011: 29f) gives an interesting example of how the Brussels office found out in 1997 that the Commission was planning a change in the implementation of the Posted Workers Directive, a change that went against the wishes of Swedish unions. Because of the early information they received the unions could mobilise (successfully) against the proposal even before it was published.

An important factor in moving Sweden towards membership of the European Community was the country's deep economic crisis in the early 1990s, with negative GDP growth in 1991, 1992 and 1993. During the crisis the Social Democratic government turned around on the issue of EC membership and Sweden had its membership referendum in 1994. The unions were active in the negotiations on EC/EU membership, with one overriding policy aim: getting a guarantee that the 'Swedish model' – in which the social partners without state intervention negotiate collective agreements – would continue to function. It was especially important to guarantee that Swedish collective agreements would be applied to all foreign and posted workers in Sweden (Nyberg 2011: 19–24). Commissioner Padraig Flynn promised that this would be the case in a letter to the Swedish labour market minister. This letter was included as an appendix to the Swedish membership agreement. Lars Nyberg notes that few at the time noticed how important the last sentence in the TCO's evaluation of the agreement and Flynn's letter would be: 'However, the Court may be persuaded to take a position on the issue if a concrete case is at issue.'³ In hindsight, we can see that Swedish unions overestimated the reliability of the Flynn promise (Nyberg 2011). I will return to the employment and labour market policy debates of the 1990s in Section 5.

4. The contemporary situation: practical aspects

Sweden joined the EU in 1995. In 1997 Saco joined the ETUC. The scene since then has been quite different from in the 1970s and 1980s, as described above. This section discusses practical aspects of Swedish unions' ETUC activity in the current period. Four aspects are considered: alliances with unions from other countries, the relationship between the three Swedish confederations within the ETUC, the Eurocadres cooperation and sectoral cooperation.

One might wonder whether Swedish unions, when they became more positive towards European integration and more proactive in their stance, would change their typical alliances within the ETUC. Historically, they have agreed typically with other Nordic unions and to some degree with the British TUC, in being skeptical with regard to the Continental unions' taste for deeper European integration and stronger coordination through the ETUC. Misgeld claimed in the 1990s that LO was starting to develop better relations and cooperation with the German DGB, despite the DGB's federalist leanings. The comments made by the actors interviewed for this chapter, however, do not support this interpretation; the interviewees claimed that it is basically the other Nordic unions with whom the Swedes have good collaboration (interview ÅZ, LD). 'The Nordics are often the odd ones out', says one, emphasising how Nordic unions operate from a different perspective from most continental unions. However, on a number of occasions, Swedish unions find common ground with other union confederations, for example, when LO and the DGB united on the issue of a rebate on the ETUC membership fee for larger organisations (like LO and DGB). Given that the Nordic alliance is the most important one for the Swedish unions, the Council of Nordic Trade Unions (CNTU) is still central to Nordic unions' work within the ETUC. The CNTU arranges meetings before ETUC meetings to discuss the issues. Sven Svensson, who was the head of the Swedish unions' Brussels office from 1989 to 2007, claims that the Swedish

3. 'Domstolen får dock det slutliga avgörandet ifall frågan på grund av något konkret fall skulle aktualiseras inför denna', quoted in Nyberg (2011: 22).

unions had good cooperation with the Austrian ÖGB about the Lisbon Strategy and with the DGB on codetermination, but it is questionable how much has been achieved due to this common understanding (Svensson and Jacobsson 2009: 24). The head of LO's international unit mentions, apart from the other Nordic unions, the German DGB, the Austrian ÖGB and the Dutch FNV as organisations with which LO has good contacts (interview L-LL). However, there is no evidence of a broader proactive agenda common to these unions, even though they have a good practical cooperation.

The Swedes typically do not advance issues within the ETUC unless all three confederations agree, or possibly the issue does not matter for one or two of the confederations, in which case the third confederation is 'allowed' to advance the issue (interview LD). They do not feel, as it is, that they can get leverage if they speak up against each other within the ETUC. However, if the Swedes became more successful in seeking bilateral alliances outside the Nordic countries, the need for pan-confederal Swedish agreement would decrease.

An interesting development in Swedish unions work within the ETUC was the launch of Eurocadres, an initiative of the Swedish manufacturing white-collar union SIF (affiliated to TCO) and the French CFDT. Eurocadres is an organisation for professionals' and managers' unions (and departments of unions) to enable them to raise such issues within the ETUC. One of the interviewees, an official at TCO, says: 'We want them to change the ETUC's "LO character" a little and start being active with regard to more "TCO issues"' (interview LD; cf. Svensson and Jacobsson 2009: 103; Grensman 2013: 4). The fact that the Swedish white-collar and professionals' unions sometimes find international trade union cooperation too blue-collar oriented, not least in rhetoric and symbolism, has also been shown in Blomqvist and Murhem's (2003: 175) study of industry sector unions. Eurocadres is a rather weak organisation financed by voluntary fees, mostly paid by the SIF's successor Unionen (Åke Zettermark, 28 November 2012). The Finnish professional union AKAVA has also been a driving force in Eurocadres; the union structure in Finland, as in Sweden, is stratified by education level. Swedes from TCO and Saco unions take part in Eurocadres. One example of an issue on which TCO and Saco unions might not agree with typical ETUC policy is the issue of bonuses for employees in the financial sector. TCO and Saco organise employees in that sector, where variable compensation is common not only for CEOs but also for 'ordinary' employees. Thus, the TCO union Finansförbundet has a different position on the issue of bonuses from the ETUC (interview LD). Other issues that Swedish unions advance through Eurocadres are professional qualifications and recognition, and education issues. TCO and Saco's active participation is an example of how the vertical organisation of the Swedish union movement shapes their participation in European cooperation.

Even though our focus in this chapter is on the confederal level and the ETUC, our view of the Swedish unions' European collaboration would be incomplete without considering the sectoral level. Especially metal workers are quite active in sectoral European cooperation, in their case in the European Metal Workers' Federation (EMF) (Blomqvist and Murhem 2003).

5. Central policy issues since the 1990s

Overall in the early twenty-first century, however, the most important issue for Swedish unions within the ETUC and the EU has been protecting their collective bargaining model against social dumping. As we have seen, this was already a key issue for the unions when

negotiating Sweden's membership agreement, and Sweden obtained a guarantee in Commissioner Flynn's letter that the Swedish collective bargaining model would not be affected by EU membership. However, in the 2000s this assumed consensus was shaken. Two (in) famous legal developments were especially important: the so-called Bolkestein directive on the common European market in services, and the *Laval* case in the European Court of Justice. The Swedish unions were very active in 2004–2006 in lobbying around the Bolkestein directive in an effort to make it less neoliberal and more compatible with the Nordic model, with wages and working conditions regulated in collective agreements, not by law. The services directive that was adopted in the end was, from a Swedish union perspective, much better than the original Bolkestein proposal; according to Dølvik and Ødegård (2012) the unions and the ETUC did play a significant role. This was indeed a victory for the unions, including the Swedish unions. But it is telling that this, one of the major victories of Swedish unions in the EU was in essence reactive: harm reduction, rather than advancing their own proposals.⁴

The *Laval* case was a conflict between Swedish unions and the Latvian construction company Laval un Partneri, which in 2004 rebuilt a school in Vaxholm, close to Stockholm. The unions wanted Laval to sign a Swedish collective agreement but the company refused, which caused the unions to picket Laval's worksite. The company sought a ruling in the Swedish Labour Court that the unions were violating its freedom to provide services in Sweden, another EU member state. The Labour Court referred the difficult case to the European Court of Justice and when the ECJ ruled that the unions' actions had been 'disproportionate' given the goals that they wanted to achieve – Swedish wages – the unions were shocked (Woolfson *et al.* 2010; Nyberg 2011; Blauberger 2012). The *Laval* case increased the salience of European issues for Swedish unions. It has become notorious, but it is important to note that in terms of conflicts between Swedish trade unions and companies on the issue of social dumping it is the 'tip of an iceberg' (Bengtsson 2016). The latest union estimate of the inflows is that in 2013 19 per cent of the workforce in construction were EU migrant workers, in forestry about 11 per cent and a lower number in other sectors (Jonsson and Larsson 2013). The latest economic study of wage effects shows slightly negative effects of the EU enlargement-related labour inflows on wages in manufacturing and other sectors (Åslund and Engdahl 2013). The social dumping debate has brought the EU to the fore in the Swedish union movement. Another aspect of this contemporary debate is the increased importance of the law for trade unions. The head of LO's international unit explained that the next post that the unit will fill is that of lawyer, because legal competence is so important for unions in the EU these days (interview L-L L).

Social dumping is not only an issue in Sweden of course. In fact, Nordic unions in the past couple of years have been very active against social dumping in Greenland, where the government wants Chinese workers to develop the mining industry, while working for Chinese wages (interview LB). The Council of Nordic Trade Unions has produced a report that compiles the different possible policy measures that can be taken against social dumping, but the Nordic unions are not united on these issues. In Norway and Finland today there are laws that facilitate the extension of collective agreements (cf. Eldring and Alsos 2012), but the Danish and Swedish LO still oppose this measure as they believe that it would reduce the incentives for workers to join unions, and thus aggravate a 'free rider' problem

4. Cf. former TCO chairman Sture Nordh, interviewed in Svensson and Jacobsson (2009: 87–88).

for the unions (interviews LB, MKN).⁵ The traditional ‘Swedish model’ entails little explicit political involvement in the labour market, leaving its regulation to the social partners (Kjellberg 1999), and regulations such as legal extension of collective agreements are still very controversial in the Swedish labour movement. However, we do see within LO that some member unions, notably the transport workers, have spoken out for legal extension of collective agreements in sectors afflicted by social dumping. Again, we see a possible partial ‘convergence’ of the Swedish model with other European counterparts (cf. Lindvall 2012). Such changes would decrease the institutional differences between the Swedish model and the other European labour markets, possibly also affecting the preferences of Swedish unions and making them more similar to their ETUC colleagues.

On the key issues of wage bargaining and labour market models I would argue that the Swedish unions’ policy at the European level is still more reactive than proactive. But on other issues the Swedes do stand out as ‘good Europeans’, with a high level of activity.

One issue on which Swedish unions have indeed played a proactive role is the integration of unions from post-communist countries into the ETUC. This is in parallel with the Swedish government’s position that the EU should be expanded to central and eastern Europe in a ‘big bang’, instead of gradually (cf. SACO 2004: 7–8). The Swedish unions have been especially active with regard to the Baltic countries, with which Sweden has historical connections and of course geographical proximity. Previously, Swedish unions ran many aid projects for unions in the Baltic countries, but today the cooperation is on a more equal footing (interview MD). An important venue for trade union cooperation across the Baltic is the Baltic Sea Trade Union Network (BASTUN) which was established in 1999 and is seated in Stockholm. It is a loose network rather than a formal organisation and without any employees; its main contact is one of the advisors from the Council of Nordic Trade Unions. BASTUN has 22 member unions in 10 different countries, including the Baltics, Poland, Germany and Russia. Its member organisations run the Baltic Organising Academy which is an organisation aimed at improving union organising and strengthening unions in the Baltic countries. It currently involves the manufacturing, transport, service and construction sectors.

6. Conclusions

The main question regarding Swedish unions and the ETUC is, will the former become more proactive than they have been in the past? It can be argued that at certain times Swedish unions have shown an enthusiasm for European cooperation (especially the late 1980s and 1990s), but traditionally the Swedes have been rather sceptical towards deeper European integration. On several European union issues – working time reduction as employment policy, European collective bargaining, statutory minimum wages – the Swedish unions still have the same dismissive attitude to Europeanising policy proposals as they had in the 1970s or 1980s. Not because they want to be negative, of course, but because they are rooted in the Nordic labour market model, which is still perceived as functional.

5. Skedinger (2008: 29) similarly sees it as unlikely that an extension law will be created, due to (a) free rider problems for unions and (b) the fact that union coverage is falling in the service sector where an extension law would hypothetically be used.

Today, however, this situation may be changing in at least two related ways. First, as Sweden has become more integrated in the European project, the salience of European issues has increased and unionists today agree that the traditional Euroscepticism is a thing of yesteryear. The salience of European issues increased steeply with EU membership in 1995, and became perhaps even more important with the social dumping debate, which has been very lively since 2004. Second, as the Swedish unions have been weakened on their home turf and the Swedish labour market model has to some degree become more similar to other European labour markets (Lindvall 2012; Baccaro and Howell 2011), the preferences of Swedish unions might to some degree be converging with those of other European unions. As I have shown, the Swedish/Nordic model is still fairly unique and the unions' position special and the Nordic unions are natural allies within the ETUC for Swedes.

To get back to the question of being proactive, I believe that the discussion above shows that even though the Swedish unions have become more positive towards European integration and cooperation and the European issues more salient for them since the 1990s, the unions have not yet found a positive, proactive programme for their European activity. Much of the 2000s were spent actively, but damage-minimizing, working against the Bolkestein directive's neoliberal tendencies and social dumping and the liberalising tendencies of the *Laval* judgment (cf. Lovén 2012). The current situation can be summarized then as follows: a positive outlook, active cooperation, but on the policy level still unclear.

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Chapter 8

Norwegian trade unions and the ETUC: a changing relationship

Jon Erik Dølvik

1. Introduction

As part of the Nordic family of European trade unionism and a strong supporter of Norway's application for EC membership at the time, LO – the Norwegian Confederation of Trade Unions – was a central player in the processes leading to the foundation of ETUC in the early 1970s. As the majority of Norwegians and trade union members rejected EC membership in a referendum in 1972, and once again in 1994 – this time backed by the LO Congress – LO's role in the ETUC has in due course been conditioned by Norway's position as insider in the Single Market through the EEA agreement and outsider in the political processes of European integration. Norwegian labour actors are thus subject to all EU rules regarding competition, free movement, labour market regulation and so on, while they have very little access to the processes shaping EU policies in these areas. For the trade unions this has made participation through ETUC and its industry federations even more important for the representation of their membership interests at European level.

This has placed them in a challenging position in the ETUC: on one hand, they are more dependent on it in promoting their interests than most other affiliates; on the other hand, they can muster less political power resources and networks to shape ETUC policy (Dølvik and Ødegaard 2004). This ambiguous position has shaped the role of Norwegian unions in the ETUC, as well as their perceptions and debates about European issues. While international labour solidarity for many years was mainly an issue for 1 May parades and high-level union conferences, the steep rise in labour migration and low-wage competition after the 2004 EU/EEA enlargement made the quandaries of transnational solidarity a matter of everyday

life at Norwegian workplaces and has placed European issues at the centre of the Norwegian trade union agenda. Spurring court cases and conflicts between the social partners, the proliferation of cross-border posting and agency work has made the impact of EU regulations, the EEA agreement and strategies to defend wage floors and worker rights in the transnational labour market subject to heated debates in Norwegian trade unions (Dølvik, Eldring and Visser 2012). Across the lines of struggle, however, awareness of the need for more effective cooperation among the unions within the ETUC has been rising, illustrating that the dynamics of economic integration are shaping perceptions of union strategy regardless of Norway's dependent, outsider-role politically.

2. National context and background

As in the other Nordic countries, Norwegian industrial relations have been distinguished by strong, centralised confederations on both sides and an encompassing multi-tiered system of collective bargaining (Dølvik and Stokke 1998). Peak-level coordination is complemented by a strong company tier of collective bargaining and 'single channel' participation through the unions (Nergaard *et al.* 2009). Union density has remained surprisingly stable since the 1950s, presently standing at around 52 percent with a slight majority of women and public sector employees (Nergaard and Stokke 2010). LO is the dominant union confederation. Predominantly organizing blue-collar workers, the LO unions' share has been declining but still accounts for half of all union members. The other half is divided among YS (the Confederation of Vocational Trade Unions), Unio (mostly organizing public employees with tertiary education) and Akademikerne (organizing professionals). LO is one of the founding members of ETUC, while the affiliations of YS and Unio were only accepted by LO in recent years.¹ Against this background, the remainder of this chapter concentrates on the relationship between LO and ETUC.

International cooperation has featured high on the agenda of LO unions, even before LO was founded in 1899. Since the first Scandinavian Worker Congress in Gothenburg 1882, these congresses have served as arenas for exchange of experience and networking among unionists from the broader northern European region and were instrumental in the development of the second International (Ousland 1949). After the breakdown of union internationalism in 1914 and the Russian Revolution in 1917, LO Norway in 1921 rejected participation in the reestablished Amsterdam International and developed ties with the Red International organised from Moscow. Following the path of the British TUC, calling for the establishment of a united international, this meant that from 1921 LO stood outside the Scandinavian as well as the broader international cooperation among mainstream union centres, including the ILO. Most LO member unions, however, kept up their cooperation with Nordic unions and the International Trade Secretariats.

As the efforts to bridge between the rivalling internationals soon proved futile, this locked LO into an awkward position which it did not overcome before 1935 when the fascist challenge compelled the Moscow-related unions to succumb to the Amsterdam International (Ousland 1949). At the same time, on the domestic front, mass unemployment in the wake of the world crisis led to settlement of a path-breaking Basic Agreement built on

1. YS became a member in 2002 and Unio in 2005.

mutual recognition between employers and unions in 1935, while a deal with the Farmers Party brought the Labour Party into government. These events marked the turn towards a reformist, nation state-centred approach in the Norwegian labour movement, initiating the era of class-compromise and tripartite cooperation that came to shape industrial relations in Norway in the postwar era. During this era, LO was a member of ICFTU and took part in meetings of its European branch (ERO-ICFTU) (Nordahl 1969), and eventually also joined the cooperation committee set up by EFTA unions in 1959. In parallel, Nordic cooperation was reinforced, leading – among other things – to a common Nordic labour market in the 1950s.

Jumping to the early 1970s, LO again became an active promoter of broad trade union integration in Europe, but this time for very different reasons than in the 1920s. When in 1970 Denmark and Norway followed Great Britain and applied for EC membership, this sparked concern about divisions among the Nordic trade unions. Due to their geopolitical position, EC membership was out of the question for Sweden and Finland. When discussions came up about the foundation of a Community-centred European trade union confederation, when the EFTA organisations risked being excluded, the pro-EC leadership of LO Norway intervened actively (Sandegren 2003). Together with other Nordic actors, it took part in talks with the leaders of the German, British and other national unions, and launched an initiative to stage the broadest possible European organisation, at the same time proposing to set up a Nordic union body to maintain Nordic unity.

While the LO leadership, supported by the extraordinary LO Congress 1972, strongly advocated EC membership² and threw its organisational resources behind the Yes-side in the 1972 referendum campaign, the labour movement was quickly turned into a battleground. With a 52–48 percent majority against membership in the referendum – and a majority against also among union members – the establishment of an all-encompassing European organisation became even more important from a national union perspective. Whereas Norway like other EFTA countries swiftly negotiated a bilateral trade agreement with the EC in 1973, the wounds and lessons from the 1972 struggle have marked trade union debates about European issues ever since. In the aftermath, the Labour Party was split as its anti-EC group joined together with the Sosialistisk Folkeparti and the remains of the Communist Party to form a new Socialist Left Party (SV). The EC struggle also had a formative impact on the radicalised youth movements of the time (Førland and Korsvik 2008). Hence, the perception of the EC as a capitalist plot came to shape much of the new generation of activists in the labour movement. Moreover, while the pro-membership campaign was dominated by business interests and the ageing power strongholds of the labour movement and the centre-right parties, the EC struggle revived cross-cutting coalitions between unions and popular forces in the primary sectors and rural districts against the elites in the centre. Joined by the new movements of the 1970s, this formed the basis for a broad popular alliance in which sovereignty and anti-centralism were the main common denominator. Together with the humiliating defeat of the LO leadership and the organisational divisions that resulted from the struggle, these factors came to influence also the subsequent rounds of trade union debate about European integration in the 1990s and 2000s.

2. LO had previously supported Norwegian membership when the issue came up in 1962 and 1967, related to the British applications that were turned down by France.

3. LO and the establishment of the ETUC

In view of the present situation, LO Norway played a remarkably central role in the processes that shaped the foundation of the ETUC in the early 1970s. Drawing on the memoirs of one of the key facilitators in LO – Kaare Sandegren, who became the first deputy secretary general of the ETUC in 1973³ – this section reviews how LO attained this role.

The events that triggered the engagement of LO Norway in the struggles about formation of the ETUC were the applications for EC membership from Great Britain, Ireland, Denmark and Norway, following the withdrawal of the French ‘veto’ against British entrance in 1969. Together with the completion of the Customs Union and the Common Market, these changes injected new dynamism into Community integration and would directly affect the labour unions in the involved countries, prompting them to reconsider their representation at European level. As described in Chapter x, union representation at European level had been divided between a plethora of bodies since the 1950s.⁴ When the EC associations of the ICFTU set up a European Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ECFTU) in 1969 and the Catholic unions followed suit by establishing a European body (EO-WCL), discussions soon began about integrating the two into an independent association of EC unions. This was highly controversial within the ICFTU. With the prospect that also the British, Danish and Norwegian EFTA organisations were about to join, a new dimension was added to the discussions. Besides the fact that the British TUC was fiercely against British membership (see Hyman, chapter 4), the issue was delicate also for the Nordic trade unions, which risked being split between ECFTU insiders and outsiders. Because the Danish and Norwegian LOs strongly supported their countries’ applications for EC membership, while that was out of question for Sweden and Finland, the positions of the Nordic LOs diverged.⁵ Given the broad skepticism in ICFTU with regard to establishing an autonomous European organisation, the situation was further complicated by the fact that the strong leader of Swedish LO, Arne Geijer, had for many years been a high-profiled leader of ICFTU and felt responsible for keeping the organisation together and avoiding rifts with the emerging European confederation. Also the Danish LO leader, Thomas Nielsen, had a central position in ICFTU and had to tread cautiously.

It was in this complicated terrain that Tor Aspengren, the head of LO Norway, took the lead among the Nordic actors and launched an initiative aimed at resolving the quandary.⁶

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3. After joining the International Department of LO in 1971, Kaare Sandegren soon became secretary of the EFTA trade union office in Brussels and in 1973 was elected the first deputy secretary general in ETUC, representing the EFTA organisations in the leadership. Eventually, as International Secretary of LO until he retired in 1995, he took an active part in the ETUC’s development over 25 years. Besides a short excerpt in the Council of Nordic Trade Unions’ 40-year anniversary publication (NFS 2012), Sandegren has summarised his experiences and reflections from these years in an unpublished mimeo which has been of invaluable help in drafting this article (Sandegren 2003). Also thanks to Kaare, I was able to stay at the ETUI and follow ETUC activities in 1992–93 when working on my PhD thesis about the ETUC and social dialogue. Through collaboration since the early 1990s, I have thus benefitted from Kaare’s immense generosity, contacts and knowledge about ETUC developments. Hence it goes without saying that this chapter and my other work on the ETUC are deeply indebted to his longstanding help and support. Thank you!
 4. The European branch of ICFTU (ERO-ICFTU), separate committees for the EC and EFTA unions, a range of sector-based International Trade Secretariats, the European branch of the Christian World Confederation of Labour (WCL) and a committee for communist unions belonging to the WFTU, to mention the most important.
 5. For example in Sweden, powerful actors such as Rudolf Meidner and Allan Larsson (advisor at IF Metall at the time, later minister of finance, and in 1995 the first Commission Director General from Sweden) were openly skeptical of an association of EC unions outside the ICFTU framework (Sandegren 2003).
 6. His main advisor in these processes was the International Secretary of LO, Thorvald Stoltenberg, who later became minister of foreign affairs in several labour governments.

Aspengren, the former metalworker, had three visions for the international work of LO: (i) develop a Nordic union including the white-collar confederations (Norway had none at that time); (ii) develop a similar structure in western Europe; and (iii) build bridges across the Iron Curtain (which was highly controversial on both sides of the Atlantic).

In June 1971, on behalf of the Nordic unions, he was invited to a conference in Oslo held on 5–6 November, where the leaders of ICFTU affiliates from Germany, Great Britain, the Netherlands, Belgium, France, Italy and the Nordic countries gathered. A few weeks earlier LO had invited the leaders of all the Italian confederations, including the euro-communist CGIL, to a preparatory meeting in Oslo – a bold step in those days. Convinced that a broad European solution was required, including not only the Catholic unions but also euro-communist unions, Aspengren opened the Oslo conference by tabling a concrete proposal to establish an ‘open, cross-political, and cross-religious’ association encompassing both EC and EFTA unions. Ideas on such a broad approach were not new and had been aired in various bilateral meetings (see Chapter x), but the launching of a clear proposal in a context in which all the key actors in the European ICFTU family were gathered evidently had a strong agenda-setting effect. According to the Swedish historian Misgeld (1997), the proposal was ‘revolutionary’. By obtaining support from the majority of the elected leaders that were present, expressed in a public resolution,⁷ and setting up a working group with a specific timetable, new momentum, direction, and commitment were injected into the process.

The initiative was far from a single-actor affair. Since 1970, there had been several meetings between leaders of the Nordic unions and the German DGB, and also with the British TUC. Through his former work as leader of ICFTU and his command of a number of languages, Arne Geijer, the leader of Swedish LO, opened doors for the Nordic group and was pivotal in securing Swedish and Nordic support for the Norwegian approach, which was launched as a common Nordic initiative. In that respect, the agreement to set up a Nordic Council of Trade unions (NFS) was essential, reassuring people that the ties among the Nordic unions would not be impaired. The Oslo conference thus emerged from a lengthy process of consultations, but the initiative by LO Norway apparently brought the process onto a new track. This put pressure on hesitant actors and enabled the Nordic actors to act as brokers between the leaders of the German and British confederations, Heinz-Oscar Vetter and Vic Feather. According to Sandegren (2003), the continued triangular talks between these actors – representing three of the main strongholds of European trade unionism – were crucial for the final outcome.

Important in this respect was reportedly a meeting in Frankfurt on 7 November 1972, where the Swedish, Danish and Norwegian LO leaders held talks with Heinz-Oscar Vetter and the DGB Bundesvorstand. As many of the strong industry unions in Germany were sceptical of an all-encompassing European organisation, the discussions with the leaders of the Nordic EFTA unions were instrumental in helping Vetter convince them that such a solution would not impair the new organisation’s capacity to influence EC processes. Another bridge between the different camps was the Brussels office of the EFTA unions – including the British TUC – which was located in the same building as ECFTU. With Kaare Sandegren as secretary, this served as a contact point between representatives of the various EC unions, the EFTA unions and Nordic and British actors in particular.

7.

As described in Chapter x, the foundation and shape of the ETUC was not sealed until the final moment. In order to influence the negotiations at the Congress in February 1973, the Danish LO leader, Thomas Nielsen, made clear that without a solution that included also the Nordic EFTA organisations, LO Denmark would refrain from joining the new organisation. To what extent that ultimatum influenced the outcome is unknown, but for the Norwegian LO and the other Nordic confederations it confirmed that their joint strategy had worked. In fact, the ETUC was founded precisely along the lines proposed by Tor Aspengren at the 1971 Oslo meeting – as an ‘open, cross-political, cross-religious’ confederation. The Nordics, siding with the British TUC, were also granted a chair as deputy secretary general and gained acceptance for their view that the branch federations should not be formal members of the ETUC, although they were granted observer status in the Executive Committee and at Congresses.

For LO Norway, the rejection of EC membership in the referendum on 25 September 1972 made the establishment of ETUC as an all-encompassing confederation especially important. At the LO Congress in May 1972 the opponents of EC membership had supported LO’s work for a united European confederation, and immediately after the referendum this approach was unanimously confirmed by the LO Secretariat. Emphasizing that it was ‘an important task to further develop cooperation with the trade unions in Europe’, it also called for the negotiation of the best possible trade agreement with the EC. The resolution adopted at that meeting entailed an approach to European integration that has guided LO policies ever since. Given the persistent popular rejection of political integration with the EC and LO’s pledge to respect the referendum, LO policies came to rely on three main pillars: first, economic integration through trade agreements and eventually the EEA agreement; second, as close cooperation with the European trade unions as possible, and third, coordination of its European policies with the other Nordic trade unions via NFS. In the governing Labour Party a similar approach was coined, namely ‘aktiv Europapolitikk’.

Since Denmark had become the only Nordic EC member state in 1972, the foundation of NFS (the Council of Nordic Trade Unions) became much more important for LO Norway and the other Nordic associations than had been foreseen when it was launched in 1971.⁸ At the meeting with the DGB in Frankfurt 1972, Heinz-Oscar Vetter jokingly asked whether the NFS was meant to become a Nordic ‘battle-group’ within the ETUC (Svenning- sen 2012). That was surely not the case, but within NFS the Nordic confederations coordinated their work in ETUC through information exchange, pre-meetings and a division of labour in which LO Denmark (until the accession of Finland and Sweden in 1995) took care of Community-specific issues, while other tasks were shared as seemed fit (Dølvik 2005; NFS 2012). Hence, the broad integration of European trade unions within the ETUC also became a vehicle for closer regional cooperation among the Nordic trade unions (eventually also including unions from the other side of the Baltic Sea). Although the cooperation in NFS has had its ebbs and flows, reflecting the changing national relationships with the EU, it has remained the regional backbone for Nordic trade union engagement in European labour issues.

8. NFS today represents around 9 million union members, making it one of the largest groupings of the ETUC, <http://www.nfs.net/languages/english/about-nfs-9063699>.

4. From European sclerosis to relaunch: implications for LO

In the wake of the 1972 oil-price hike and the onset of stagflation in Europe, the spirit of European optimism that had marked the ETUC's foundation soon waned. As for other affiliates, domestic issues rapidly came to dominate the agenda also in LO Norway. It was not until 1989 when Jacques Delors launched the idea of linking the EFTA countries to the emerging Single Market that European integration again became a salient issue among Norwegian trade unions.

After LO had been engaged in securing a viable trade agreement with the EC in 1973, interest in European issues receded except among the tiny circles that were directly involved in the ETUC meetings.⁹ Still, at the 1974 ETUC Congress LO followed up its firm support of membership for the Italian CGIL and the Catholic unions. The Nordic LOs also provided broad support for the underground work of the trade unions in Spain, Portugal and Greece during the resistance against the dictatorship and the subsequent years of union rebuilding. The longstanding fraternal Iberian–Nordic ties within the ETUC were anchored in these experiences (Dølvik 1997). In the 1980s, Norwegian unions were preoccupied mainly by defensive national struggles. The conservative government elected in 1981 cut taxes, liberalised banks and the housing market and called for more labour market 'flexibility'. Union density was falling and organised labour was increasingly considered a relic of the past. In 1986, however, a mass lock-out sparked large-scale conflict at the same time as oil prices dived and the financial bubble was peaking. The conflict inflicted a severe defeat on the employers, which eventually established a new association in 1988 (NHO, replacing NAF), while the conservative coalition resigned and was replaced by a Labour government led by Gro Harlem Brundtland. These events initiated a turbulent period marked by devaluation, skyrocketing interest rates and the bursting of the financial bubble, followed by a collapse of the banks and housing market, wage laws and soaring unemployment. During the 1980s, high inflation and nominal wage growth brought reduced competitiveness, sweeping restructuring and severe job losses. On several occasions the EC also accused the energy-intensive Norwegian industries of 'dumping', due to the cheap Norwegian electricity.

It was in this gloomy context that Norway's relationship to the EC resurfaced on the union agenda in 1989. At the same time LO was ridden by leadership crisis, until at the 1989 Congress for the first time in LO history Yngve Hågensen successfully challenged the insider candidate. For the new leadership of LO, as well as for its employer counterpart in NHO it appeared imperative to secure Norwegian manufacturing equal access to the Single Market (NOU 2012: 2). Their shared conviction was bolstered by tripartite negotiations to overcome the crisis and restoration of the Norwegian tradition of centralised wage coordination – eventually codified in the Solidarity Alternative (NOU 1992: 25). Hence, among the social partners the adjustment of Norway's relationship to the EC became linked with efforts to revitalise the national model of industrial relations and revise its frameworks of economic governance.

In the preceding decade, LO had, like other affiliates, participated in ETUC meetings as part of its everyday routine, but from the 1985 Congress in Milan, the new dynamics

9. Jon-Ivar Nåsund, who took over as International Secretary of LO after Kaare Sandegren, was in this period deputy secretary general of ETUC (1979–1982). Apart from these two, there has been no LO representative in the ETUC Secretariat and only one on the ETUC staff (for a short period).

emanating from the Single Market process and Delors' relaunch of the social dialogue spurred renewed interest. In EFTA, efforts had been made to couple the EFTA countries to the EC process of removing trade barriers, but it soon became clear that EFTA's institutional structures were unable to match the new dynamism on the EC side. Hence, when Jacques Delors delivered a forceful speech at the ETUC Congress in Stockholm in May 1988 inviting European trade unions to take part in developing a Social Europe built on social dialogue, he found an attentive Nordic audience. That his speech at the TUC Congress later the same year made the British TUC adopt a strongly Euro-optimistic approach, reinforced the impact. When in January 1989 Delors suggested that the EFTA countries could take part in the Single Market by building a European Economic Area (EEA) – and this invitation was reinforced at an EFTA meeting in Oslo soon after – a new agenda was opened also among Norwegian trade unions.

5. LO and the EEA agreement: interim solution or lasting compromise?

The leaders of the EFTA unions soon agreed to back the EEA process, by which the EFTA countries could become part of the Single Market, including the social dimension, without taking part in EC decision-making. However, with seven EFTA countries and twelve EC countries at the time, they also called for EFTA participation in decision-shaping processes. In the leadership of LO Norway, the prospect of a broad EEA agreement was received with enthusiasm. Enabling a joint Nordic approach to deepen the ties with Europe, it also allowed them to push the sensitive issue of EC membership into the future. At the LO Congress in May 1989 a resolution about 'the trade unions and Europe' was adopted with a broad majority. Welcoming the ongoing changes in Europe and the talks between EFTA and the EC, it reaffirmed that LO acknowledged the 1972 referendum and that EC membership was not on the agenda, but made clear that Norwegian workers had a direct interest in access to the Single Market and that LO would adopt a pro-active approach. It also called upon LO unions to strengthen their cooperation with European unions in order to develop transnational trade union rights and emphasised that LO would launch an open, broad debate about Norway's relationship to the EC.

During 1989 and 1990, however, external events altered the basis for the EEA approach. With the fall of the Berlin Wall, Finland, Austria and Sweden felt less bound by their neutrality and when the financial collapse hit Sweden in 1990, the Labour Prime Minister, Ingvar Carlsson, announced that Sweden would apply for EC membership. Austria had already voiced similar ideas, and soon after Finland followed suit, raising the prospect of a huge shift in the balance between the EC and EFTA pillars of a possible EEA agreement. Being well aware that the outcome of a new struggle over EC membership in Norway would be highly uncertain, this complicated the situation for LO Norway, where a membership debate was likely to re-open the wounds from 1972. The LO leadership thus decided to adopt a cautious step-by-step approach, stick to the EEA track and use all its energy to influence the EEA negotiations. The aim was to obtain an agreement that could ensure broad union support and secure Norwegian industries equal access to the Single Market regardless of what happened in case of an eventual membership debate. As such, the EEA agreement was perceived as a lifeline securing Norwegian workplaces and linking the trade unions to the unfolding changes in Europe. With this aim LO developed a list of 15 demands that would

have to be fulfilled to obtain LO support for an EEA agreement.¹⁰ Among them was, in line with the ECJ's *Rush* ruling, that cross-border workers should have the right to host-country wages and working conditions.

In the following year it became clear that the EU would not accept any kind of co-decision mechanisms, and that Sweden, Finland and Austria only saw the EEA agreement as an interim solution. Switzerland seemed inclined to reject the agreement altogether. This weakened the EFTA countries' negotiating power and cast the outcome in doubt. When finally the negotiations were closed and the draft EEA agreement was signed in Porto, 2 May 1992, LO swiftly convened its highest decision-making body between Congresses to decide what to do (22 June 1992). In the meanwhile, Prime Minister Gro Harlem Brundtland had announced that the Labour Party would propose that Norway apply for EC membership. This caused some concern in the trade unions that the mixing of agendas could weaken support for EEA as an independent alternative or fallback. When coming to the vote it was clear that far from all LO's 15 demands were fulfilled, but in a situation where the fate of the EEA agreement was subject to rising uncertainty a large majority decided to throw LO's weight behind the agreement. Decisive here was that the anti-EU faction in the unions was split in their view on EEA; a minority denounced it as 'membership-light', while the majority saw it as a way to avoid EC membership. In the adopted resolution, a central precondition for LO support was that host-country conditions would apply to cross-border work. In response to LO demands, a law enabling extension of collective agreements was adopted in 1993 and eventually became the unions' main tool against wage dumping when labour migration soared from 2004. After the EEA agreement was accepted by the required three-quarters majority in the Parliament in September 1992 – only opposed by the Socialist Left Party and the Centre Party – in LO it was considered an important achievement and a large step towards Europe. But it was no time for celebration, because the internal struggle over EC membership was already under way.

6. LO and EU membership: uniting Europe and splitting the unions?

In his opening speech at the 1993 Congress, LO leader Yngve Hågensen emphasised that the relationship with Europe was of the utmost importance for the Norwegian trade unions. The LO leadership therefore considered it crucial to handle the issue in a way that ensured open debate and a proper process. Hence a whole day was allotted to European issues. The leaders of LO Sweden, LO Denmark and the British TUC – Stig Malm, Finn Thorgrimsson and Norman Willis – were invited to share their thoughts about the pros and cons of EC membership. Before addressing the substantial issues at stake, Hågensen pointed to the uncertainties marking the debates about the future shape of Europe even in EC member states, and added:

When even countries that are members of the EC are marked by uncertainty, yes, then, comrades, there must be room for uncertainty and doubts also in the Norwegian debate! [...] So far the Norwegian debate has in too large an extent been marked

¹⁰. To prepare for a broad debate among the LO membership, Fafø was assigned to make a study about the developments and options opening up in Europe (Dølvik *et al.* 1991).

by self-righteousness. That is something we as a movement must warn ourselves against. If there was one thing the EC struggle in the early 1970s taught us, it was that self-righteousness created a divided nation, and even worse – it led to a split labour movement. It took us decades to overcome the paralysing effects inflicted upon us by that. This must not be allowed to happen again, and it is our responsibility that it does not.¹¹

Accordingly, the Congress decided to prepare for a broad, open debate based on balanced and objective information.¹² In doing so, it called for closer cooperation with the trade unions in Europe and strengthened support for the rebuilding of unionism in central and eastern Europe.

When the Congress met again to determine LO's standpoint on 22 September 1994, the situation had changed profoundly. Over the previous year, the No-to-EU side in LO had run an intensive, well-organised campaign, targeting every undecided delegate. The LO leadership, by contrast, had played by the agreed rules. Awaiting the results of the negotiations with the EU and the assessment provided by Fafo, it postponed making its views known until the issues had been debated in the member unions. In consequence the arena had for almost a year been left to the vociferous No-side, while there was virtually no effective Yes-side in the unions until the Congress started (Tolstrup Andersen 2011). When the LO Secretariat finally formulated its recommendation to the Congress a few days before it started, it confusingly presented four different alternatives. The Secretariat majority proposed EU membership on the condition that Sweden and Finland joined, while two representatives from Fellesforbundet¹³ proposed membership unconditionally. A strong minority rejected EU membership, arguing that the EEA agreement was a better alternative, keeping Norway out of EMU and protecting the primary sectors. A single representative proposed not taking a stance and leaving it to the member unions, similar to what LO Sweden had done.

The Congress debate became a highly uneven contest. The No-side featured a long list of speakers including a number of individual union leaders and heavyweights, especially from the sheltered sectors, while that of the Yes-side was shorter, weaker and hampered by the fact that its key spokesman – the forceful LO leader Yngve Hågensen – stuck to his pledge to defend union unity and not play hardball. Hence, when it came to the vote it was hardly surprising – for outside observers – that the No-side drew the longest straw. With 156 votes against and 152 in favour of EU membership, it was as close as it could get (Tolstrup Andersen 2011: 92).

11. LO, Minutes from 1993 LO Congress, p. 160, author's translation.

12. Later on, Fafo was assigned to prepare a study assessing the consequences of the different alternatives for workers and trade unions. The report, presented in June 1994, leaned towards the view that the most plausible solution for Norwegian trade unions would be a joint Nordic approach, either on the basis of EC membership or the EEA agreement (Dølvik ed. 1994). It was publically received as a fairly balanced contribution, but the union No-side immediately denounced it as biased and full of pre-ordered views. This pertained especially to the report's suggestion that if LO decided to recommend EU membership it might be wise to consider a reservation against joining EMU, similar to what Great Britain, Denmark and Sweden had already done. The No-side acted forcefully to kill that idea by arguing that such an option didn't exist and was in breach of the Maastricht Treaty. The idea was never really considered in the LO debate and the dangers of EMU were thus the key argument used by the No-side at the eventual LO Congress.

13. Fellesforbundet is the largest private sector union in Norway, formed in 1988 through a merger of unions in metalworking, construction and the green sector. At the Congress, Fellesforbundet withdrew its proposal and supported the conditional Yes-alternative.

In retrospect it is worth underscoring that the outcome in no way meant that LO became an anti-EU organisation. While almost half of the Congress supported EU membership, the other half voted for a resolution supporting the EEA agreement – implying incorporation in the Single Market – and called for strengthened cooperation within the ETUC and active participation in the EU social dialogue. In this sense, the LO leadership succeeded in keeping the organisation together and moving it much closer to Europe. Although the leadership received praise for its stewardship of the process, it did not succeed in staging an open, balanced debate. Through its self-imposed, withdrawn role as impartial administrator of the process and waiting to take a stance until the very last moment, it enabled the No-side to gain a huge advantage in setting the agenda and dominating the debates. On the other hand, given the strong legacy from 1972 and that the No-side evidently had much stronger feelings about the outcome, a different outcome would probably have made it more difficult to retain unity within LO. As things evolved the EEA agreement came to serve as a robust compromise between the two sides in LO, providing a basis for a pragmatic European approach and close cooperation with the ETUC. The EEA compromise also contributed to isolating the minority of hard-core anti-EU forces within LO, which only very recently had dared to challenge LO's staunch support for the EEA agreement.

7. Developments since 1994: an overview

What has the outcome of the struggle in the early 1990s meant for the Norwegian trade unions' relationship to Europe and to the ETUC?

In economic terms, the two decades of Norwegian participation in the Single Market have – partly owing to soaring offshore activities and revenues – been a period of unprecedented progress. Employment has risen more than 25 per cent, unemployment is low, real wages have surged and the distribution of wages has changed remarkably little. The system of collective bargaining and tripartite cooperation has been consolidated and union density has remained stable. To the surprise of many unionists, EU rules have strengthened worker rights in several areas, such as European Works Councils, transfers of undertakings, gender equality, working time, health and safety and other issues (LO 2010). Norway was the first country to implement the EWC directive in 1995, being incorporated in the Basic Agreement between LO and NHO and extended by legislation. Thus, during the first decade of the EEA agreement the adjustment to EU labour market rules was subject to little controversy and the social partners cooperated closely in following up EU directives and the social dialogue.

In the ETUC, it was important for LO to show that its political outsider role would not impair its cooperation with European trade unions. Making its Brussels office a permanent part of the organisation, LO aimed to compensate for its lack of political links with an active presence in the activities of the ETUC and the EIFs. At the ETUC 1991 Congress, LO had supported the deepening of ETUC integration. It had also joined with the German and Italian unions leading to the election of Emilio Gabaglio as ETUC secretary general. Still, in line with Nordic tradition, LO was sceptical of the federalist drive that marked the ETUC debate and opposed the full ETUC membership of the industry federations, which in the Nordic affiliates' view would give their member unions two potentially conflicting channels of representation. In the subsequent discussion about European collective bargaining, the Nordic unions sided with the Germans and the British in insisting that collective bargaining should remain the

prerogative of the national affiliates. However, LO strongly supported that the ETUC should exploit the new mechanism of 'negotiated legislation' enabled through the 31 October Agreement and the Maastricht Social Protocol (Dølvik 1997: xx). In cooperation with the other Nordic affiliates, LO hence engaged actively in the development of a bargaining order in the ETUC, which in 1996 resulted in stringent procedures for the determination of bargaining mandates and ratification of agreements. Accordingly, LO took part in all the rounds of European framework negotiations and social dialogue meetings. It also vested sizeable resources in supporting the new affiliates from central and eastern Europe. When, in parallel, Yngve Hågensen served as a dedicated and respected vice-president in the ETUC, who was re-elected several times until he withdrew in 1999, it seemed that LO had successfully managed to re-define its role in the ETUC on the basis of the EEA agreement.

Nonetheless, Norway's political outsider role implied that LO had little to contribute to the ETUC efforts to influence EU decision-making. Since LO actors had less access to information and networks that could be used in political exchanges in Brussels, their lack of 'lobby-power' made them less useful as partners in union collaboration at EU level and more dependent on their Nordic sister organisations. When the number of affiliates increased as a result of ETUC enlargement, the competition for positions in delegations and meetings also hardened. Gradually, it thus became evident that Norway's marginal role made it more demanding and less attractive for national unionists to vest time and energy in European processes in which they did not participate on equal terms and gained little prestige at home (Dølvik and Ødegaard 2004: xx). Such tendencies were reinforced when Yngve Hågensen retired from the ETUC Steering Committee.

Accordingly, when in 2004 Fafo, at the request of LO, evaluated experiences with the EEA agreement after 10 years, it emphasised the political handicap Norwegian unions had had to overcome in making their voice heard at European level and within the ETUC (Dølvik and Ødegaard 2004: xx). During the work on the report it transpired that the LO leadership was well aware of this handicap and was considering a review of its approach to EU membership. Eastward enlargement and the strong appreciation of the krone at the time, which cost tens of thousands of manufacturing jobs, pulled in the same direction. However, before the report was published, national political events closed the window for any further deliberations in that direction. In order to overthrow the centre-right government in the 2005 election, the Labour Party had in the meanwhile, with support from LO, entered into an electoral coalition with the Socialist Left Party and the Centre Party. Their absolute condition was that EU membership was out of the question, but they had to accept that the Red-Green coalition should be based on the EEA agreement. When LO threw all its weight behind the Red-Green election campaign, which led to victory in 2005 and again in 2009, this foreclosed any further debate about Norway's relationship to the EU or the EEA. This underscored the fact, which was confirmed anew in the 2013 election, that with the present party constellations in Norway no government majority can be formed without a coalition comprising both parties that are against and for EU membership. The EEA agreement has thus become the only possible government platform when it comes to European policies. What many in 1992 saw as an interim solution which nobody really liked, has turned into a long-lasting 'national compromise' which also conditions trade union debates about European policies. In recent years Norway has further extended cooperation with the EU by joining Schengen, Dublin, Europol, Eurojust, Prüm, the Lugano convention, the scheme for civil and military handling of crisis, the Nordic Battle group, the EEA financial mechanisms and a range of other programmes (NOU 2012: 2. p 36). By 2013, Norway's agreements with

the EU comprised a broader range of areas than had been conceived in the membership agreement rejected in 1994, save for the primary sectors, the food industry and EMU. In most LO unions, these exemptions are considered more important than the lack of political influence – which in their view would have been limited anyway – underscoring their pragmatic approach to European policies.

The Norwegian trade unions welcomed the 2004 and 2007 enlargements of the EU and EEA. They also welcomed labour migration and were central in securing the liberal transitional arrangements that basically allowed free movement of workers from accession states on condition they received Norwegian wages. These conditions were repealed in 2009 (and in 2012 for Romania and Bulgaria). With a prospering economy and high wages, labour migration to Norway has, since 2004, been among the highest in Europe per capita. By 2012 more than 10 per cent of the labour force comprised EU citizens, which accounted for around 70 per cent of the net employment increase that year. Like elsewhere, the opening of the markets for labour and services between countries with such huge wage gaps has brought new challenges for the trade unions. The surge in labour migration has fuelled growth and filled holes in the labour market, but has also opened new opportunities for employers who want to take advantage of the immigrants' weak negotiating position. Circumvention of rules, low wage competition and social dumping has mushroomed – especially in the context of cross-border provision of services and temporary agency work – and has put the system of labour market regulation and collective bargaining under pressure in several sectors.

The regulation of conditions for labour migrants and posted workers in particular has thus become an area of political controversy and conflict with employers. LO's main response has been to activate the 1993 law on extension of collective agreements,¹⁴ exert pressure on the government to enact more stringent enforcement mechanisms and offer organisation and support among migrant workers. According to the construction union in Oslo, more than 30 per cent of their members are now labour migrants, mainly from the new member states (Eldring *et al.* 2012). LO unions have also organised collaboration projects and support for Baltic and Polish unions, accompanied by several EEA-funded projects to foster unionism and systems of workplace cooperation in Romania and other countries. With support from the Red-Green government, which has launched three action plans with a range of measures – including contractor liability throughout the entire subcontractor chain – Norway has a comprehensive strategy against social dumping.

Nevertheless, the unions are struggling to keep up with the problems, especially with regard to the hiring of cheap foreign labour through temp agencies and cross-border sub-contracting. In these areas, the impact of EU rules has spurred conflict with the employers and strife within the union movement. Norway was not directly affected by the *Laval* case, but in the field of public procurement the Norwegian application of ILO Convention No. 94 was, similar to the *Rüffert* case, challenged by ESA (EEA Surveillance Authority). Furthermore, the extension of the collective agreement in the shipyard sector – which is a major importer of central and eastern European labour – was challenged in court by the employers, claiming that the stipulated compensation for travel, lodging and housing was in breach of EU rules. In parallel, many unionists, spurred by the union EEA/EU opposition, feared that the EU Temporary Agency Work Directive could lead to further deregulation of the sprawling agency sector. Eventually the resistance became so strong

14. By 2013, such extension rules apply in construction, shipyards, cleaning and the agricultural section.

that LO shifted its stance and called on the government to ‘veto’ the directive in the EEA Committee. In this case, the Red-Green government did not listen, however.¹⁵

The increase in low wage competition and shifts in employers’ hiring strategies in recent years, together with growing fears that EU rules and court decisions will constrain union action against social dumping, have spurred union opposition to the EEA agreement. In 2011, several major unions funded a study of alternatives to the EEA agreement and in 2012 the largest LO union (Fagforbundet in the municipal sector) forwarded a proposal to the 2013 LO Congress demanding that working life issues should be exempted from the EEA agreement. The proposal won considerable support and tempers ran high in union debates. If it were not for the fact that the ESA dropped the case against Norway’s application of ILO Convention No. 94 and the Supreme Court soon afterwards rejected the employers’ appeal against the extension in the shipyard industry, the outcome of the 2013 LO Congress regarding EEA would have been highly uncertain. The compromise that was eventually struck entailed continued LO support for the EEA agreement, on condition that Norway makes greater use of the ‘room to manoeuvre’ it provides and that LO fight for a veto against all EU/EEA rules that contravene ILO conventions ratified by Norway or that violate national workers’ and union rights. With the centre-right victory in the 2013 election, and several controversial EU measures coming up, all indices suggest that the union strife over EEA issues will continue. The proposed EU directive on the enforcement of posting rules, entailing an exhaustive list of control measures against social dumping – including chain liability only in the first layer of contracts, which will conflict with Norwegian rules obtained through strong union pressure – is likely to be a first test. Another is the Fourth Railway Package. The EU call for adjustments in the EEA agreement and better compliance with the common rules – which will directly collide with the union call for more exemptions – may throw additional fuel on the fire.

To sum up, over the past decade there has been a twofold change in Norwegian unions’ approach to European issues. On one hand, Norway’s asymmetric relationship to the EU, which means that Norway has to comply with the bulk of EU rules without having any democratic influence on their enactment, has made the EEA agreement more contested among the unions. The growing discrepancy between the economic and social dimension of EU integration, aggravated by the euro crisis, has brought support for EU membership to an historical low and strengthened the unease with the EEA agreement. On the other hand, the rise in labour migration from the EU has made European issues a part of everyday life at Norwegian workplaces. Challenging deep-seated perceptions of labour solidarity, the struggle against exploitation of labour migrants and erosion of collective agreements has moved to the centre of union debates and has strengthened the sense of union purpose and identity. Furthermore, the impact of EU/EEA rules on the ability to cope with such problems and the more autonomous role that the ETUC has taken in fighting such constraints have, together with the European crisis, heightened trade union awareness of the need for more effective union cooperation in Europe. Regardless of views about the EU and the EEA, the support for ETUC and the engagement in joint European action have therefore been rising. In combination, these tendencies can be viewed as a reinforced Europeanisation of Norwegian trade union debates and strategies, which are accompanied by growing opposition to the current mode of European

15. After the directive came into force in January 2013, however, it seems that its equal treatment clause became a useful tool for the unions in countering wage dumping.

integration. In political terms, this means that Norwegian membership of the EU has become more unlikely than ever and that the 'national compromise' around the EEA agreement is likely to experience continued contestation in the trade union movement.

**Interview with Yngve Hågensen,
leader of LO 1989–2001, deputy president
of ETUC, member of the ETUC Executive
Committee and Steering Committee
1991–2001**

'Of all the international organisations we were involved in, the ETUC was most important for our members' everyday lives – affecting jobs, working conditions, and wages – so to us the relationship with the ETUC was like a collective agreement.'

As chairman, Yngve Hågensen led LO Norway through one of its most challenging periods in modern times. Tackling a severe economic crisis and a hard struggle over EU membership at home, representing national workers' interests in Europe and preserving LO's position in the ETUC after its Congress, against his advice, had rejected EU membership, required clever leadership. However, with his extraordinary skills, rhetorical force, charisma and personal strength, Yngve managed to ride the storms until he retired in 2001.

Did you experience any change in LO's role in the ETUC after the LO Congress in 1994 voted down your proposal to join the EU?

It was indeed demanding to maintain our role on an equal footing and raise our voice in ETUC when we, so to speak, became 'unorganised, non-paying' members of the Community through the EEA agreement – akin to what we trade unionists call 'free riders'. But we didn't become B-members. After some initial ruffles, not least within the Nordic group, it was my experience in the Steering Committee and the Executive that LO was respected and listened to, just like any other affiliate, even if LO was small and we remained outside the EU. I felt we were taken seriously and in fact I think one of the strengths of the ETUC was that all affiliates were treated equally on the basis of their efforts and arguments and not on the basis of their size.

That may well be true, but don't you think it played a role that you had always advocated Norwegian membership and been active and present on the board?

Well, more important, I think, was LO's proactive role in the ETUC foundation process. Thanks to the bold initiatives of Tor Aspengren in cooperation with – among others – Vetter from DGB, the steady follow-up of the ETUC by his successors and, not least, the dedication and standing of Kaare Sandegren as former ETUC deputy, I think LO had established credibility at the ETUC that we benefitted from in the 1990s. Establishing an LO office in Brussels in 1990 also signalled our commitment to European cooperation and helped maintain networks. Furthermore, it does of course matter that you show up in the meetings, listen, contribute and respect the work of other affiliates.

In international organisations, coalition-building is important. With whom did LO usually cooperate? Also, what about the power-constellations in the ETUC in those days?

Apart from the Nordics, we had always close relations with the Germans, who were genuinely concerned about Nordic views and represented a stabilising force, or bridge-builder, in the ETUC. From the 1970s we had also developed strong ties with the Italian and Spanish organisations, and we always maintained close contacts with our Austrian and Dutch comrades. As one of the largest affiliates, the TUC was of course also important for us but on a less regular basis. As for power relations, one of the great things with the ETUC was that regardless of size there was no clear power centre or dominant organisations. This gave the smaller affiliates leeway and influence if they had good arguments and were well prepared. That's why it worked so well, I think. For LO, the Nordic coordination was of course

essential; when we spoke with one voice we knew we would be listened to. After Sweden and Finland became EU members this changed a bit, but they soon realised they couldn't achieve much by going it alone.

For many ETUC affiliates it was puzzling that LO and Norway chose to stay with the EEA agreement and not follow the other Nordic countries into the EU. Why was that?

In 1972, LO experienced a deep split over EC membership that it took us many years to overcome. Then the leadership tried to pressurise the union members and a majority revolted by voting 'no' in the referendum, resulting in a long-lasting confidence crisis in the union movement. Hence, when I was elected leader in 1989 and the relationship to the EC came up again, we were acutely aware of the divisive potential of the issue and made it clear that it was just as important to keep the trade union movement together as to promote European unity. We therefore decided to take our time and organise a process that was open, democratic and based on broad, objective information, so that we could move forward in unity whatever the outcome might be. When the EEA process was launched by Delors, who didn't want new member states at the time, we saw it as a constructive basis for a step-by-step approach, which also enabled the Nordic and EFTA unions to handle the issue in a coordinated way. Actually we had a long meeting with Delors who was curious to hear the varying views in our delegation. Welcoming the changes going on in Europe, we left no doubt that we wanted to address them in a proactive way and in cooperation with our European trade union comrades. Given the domestic economic crisis and the uncertain outcome of any referendum, however, it was from the outset urgent for us to bring home a good EEA agreement that could secure Norwegian industries equal access to the Single Market and safeguard our members' jobs. Equally important was to ensure workers' rights, the social dimension and participation in the social dialogue on an equal footing. Since we succeeded in that and won broad support in the member unions, the EEA agreement became an important lifeline for us and was very positively perceived among the trade unions. In many

ways it served as a 'national compromise' between conflicting interests and sectors, not least in LO itself.

How do you explain that LO didn't follow its Nordic sister organisations into the EU, and what has it meant for LO's relationship to Europe and the ETUC?

Our Nordic comrades came from a different position and had not gone through such a traumatic split as we had in 1972. Furthermore, in LO Norway the EEA agreement was seen as a significant step, opening up new channels and strengthening our ties with Europe, even if we didn't get our democratic voice. In the LO leadership, we trod a cautious line and proposed that Norway should follow Sweden and Finland, whether they chose to enter the EU or not. But I never left any doubt that it would be best for European trade unionism that all the Nordic countries took part in the political struggle within the EU system. By contrast the union No-to-EU faction launched a fierce campaign, concentrating above all on the dangers entailed in the EMU project. Eventually, they won with a tiny majority at the Congress in 1994. In hindsight, it was clearly an uneven battle since the No-campaign mobilised all possible means, whereas the leadership stuck to the gentle line we had agreed. Hence, for me the outcome was disappointing at the time, but we managed to keep the unions together and it has turned out that the EEA agreement has served our interests well after all. A problem, however, is that many unions in other countries don't really know about the EEA and are not aware that we are bound by exactly the same Single Market rules as they are. For some of us it is also a nuisance that we lack a political voice in Europe, but the EEA agreement has clearly strengthened LO's ties with the ETUC and Europe and has been immensely important for the stabilisation of the Norwegian economy and politics. With enlargement and the current economic crisis, it has also become much clearer among Norwegian unionists that the unions across Europe need to act together, whether we are inside or outside the EU. So, in my view, those who want to leave the EEA and cut our ties to Europe really don't understand what they are talking about. In my time,

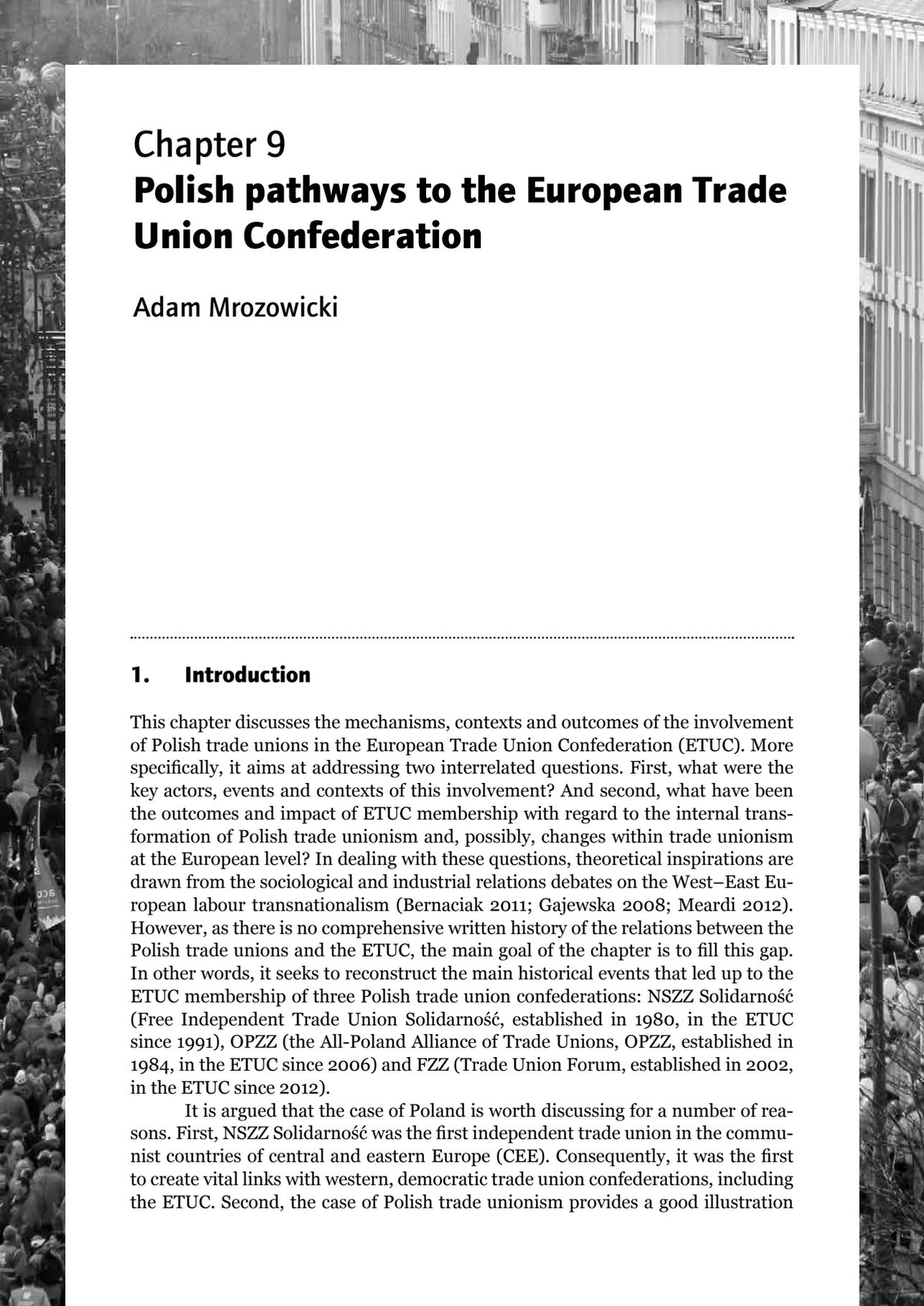
the ETUC was the international organisation we took part in that was most important for our members' everyday life – affecting jobs, working conditions and wages – so to us the relationship to the ETUC was like a collective agreement. In the current circumstances the role of the ETUC in developing European labour solidarity has clearly become more important than ever and needs to be strengthened further.

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Chapter 9

Polish pathways to the European Trade Union Confederation

Adam Mrozowicki

1. Introduction

This chapter discusses the mechanisms, contexts and outcomes of the involvement of Polish trade unions in the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC). More specifically, it aims at addressing two interrelated questions. First, what were the key actors, events and contexts of this involvement? And second, what have been the outcomes and impact of ETUC membership with regard to the internal transformation of Polish trade unionism and, possibly, changes within trade unionism at the European level? In dealing with these questions, theoretical inspirations are drawn from the sociological and industrial relations debates on the West–East European labour transnationalism (Bernaciak 2011; Gajewska 2008; Meardi 2012). However, as there is no comprehensive written history of the relations between the Polish trade unions and the ETUC, the main goal of the chapter is to fill this gap. In other words, it seeks to reconstruct the main historical events that led up to the ETUC membership of three Polish trade union confederations: NSZZ Solidarność (Free Independent Trade Union Solidarność, established in 1980, in the ETUC since 1991), OPZZ (the All-Poland Alliance of Trade Unions, OPZZ, established in 1984, in the ETUC since 2006) and FZZ (Trade Union Forum, established in 2002, in the ETUC since 2012).

It is argued that the case of Poland is worth discussing for a number of reasons. First, NSZZ Solidarność was the first independent trade union in the communist countries of central and eastern Europe (CEE). Consequently, it was the first to create vital links with western, democratic trade union confederations, including the ETUC. Second, the case of Polish trade unionism provides a good illustration

of the impact of the historical, ‘post-socialist’ trade union identities and local inter-union conflicts on central and eastern European trade unions’ pathways to the ETUC. In this respect, the analysis can contribute to the large body of literature that discusses the legacy of pre-1989 unionism in shaping the present and future of trade unions in central and eastern Europe (Ost 2005). Third, the analysis of Polish trade union involvement in the ETUC demonstrates the transformative potential of internationalisation for trade unions in CEE countries. In this regard, it can add to the literature on the role of transnational solidarity in trade union revitalisation (Bernaciak 2011; Bieler and Lindberg 2011; Gajewska 2009). It is suggested that the participation of the Polish trade unions in the ETUC was one of important factors that helped to overcome historical divisions among the ‘reformed’ post-socialist trade union OPZZ, NSZZ Solidarność and a new confederation FZZ. Finally, the chapter argues that the central and eastern European trade unionism can also contribute to internal reforms within the European trade union movement and create new, East–West solidarities, such as the joint trade union protests against the services directive (Directive 2006/123/EC) in the internal market (Gajewska 2008; Bernaciak 2010).

Our analysis derives from various historical and sociological data sources. The most extensive data for the history of international relations exist for NSZZ Solidarność, including interviews, archives, books and articles (for example, Goddeeris 2006). A large part of the archival data of the International Bureau of NSZZ Solidarność was collected by Anna Wolańska (Wolańska 2008). In case of the OPZZ, we have to rely to a large extent on oral history and selected documents from the years 2000–2012 of the International Cooperation and European Integration Section of OPZZ provided by Piotr Ostrowski (from 2000 onwards). In the case of FZZ, due to the creation of the confederation in 2002 and its very recent access to the ETUC (in March 2012), the main sources are expert interviews and press releases. For the sake of this chapter, six expert interviews were carried out in 2012–2013 with key trade unionists responsible for international relations in NSZZ Solidarność, OPZZ and FZZ.¹ It should be mentioned that some of the problems discussed in the chapter remain unresolved and controversial; the adequate explanation of others is still impossible due to problems of access to important documents on international contacts of NSZZ Solidarność and OPZZ in 1980–2000.

The chapter is structured as follows. We begin with a short literature review on the problems of Polish trade unions’ international trade union involvement. In the body of the chapter, the pathways of NSZZ Solidarność, OPZZ and (briefly) FZZ to the ETUC are discussed with reference to three main phases: (i) the state socialist phase of bi-lateral contacts between NSZZ Solidarność and (much less extensive) OPZZ with western European trade unions (1980–1989); (ii) the phase before Poland’s accession to the European Union, marked by the strong presence of NSZZ Solidarność in the ETUC and OPZZ’s unsuccessful attempts to join the ETUC (1989–2004/2006); and (iii) the current phase of ‘normalization’, marked by closer cooperation and the increasing presence of Polish trade unions in the ETUC. In the last part of the chapter, some conclusions are offered.

1. The interviews are referred to by their abbreviations as suggested by the list at the end of the chapter.

2. New internationalisation of central and eastern European unionism: the case of Poland

The sociological and industrial relations literature mentions various generic obstacles to transnational union activity, including a shortage of resources; difficulties in constructing transnational union identity (Meardi 2012: 157); the problem of defining common interests as a result of persistent economic inequalities among countries; the expansion of 'flexible' working arrangements on a global scale; the dominance of neoliberal ideology (Silver 2003); and the expansion of the 'managerialist', top-down mode of labour internationalism, combined with the ideological crisis of social democratic unionism (Upchurch, Taylor and Mathers 2009: 162). In contrast, other scholars have pointed to a range of factors that can foster the emergence of transnational trade union movements. Bernaciak (2011: 38–39) recently summarised some of their arguments. First, it is argued that workers in transnational industries are more prone to mobilise at the transnational level as they are subject to pressures stemming from beyond the boundaries of a single nation state (see also Silver 2003). Second, actor-centred approaches suggest that cooperation might emerge as a result of trust-building and common socialisation experiences shared by trade union representatives from various countries (Gajewska 2008). Third, within the interest-based approach, it is argued that transnational union activities are more likely to emerge if the internationalisation can serve national trade union interests. Finally, there are cost-benefit considerations (see Bernaciak 2010: 131) which suggest that cooperation is more likely to emerge when it is beneficial for all parties involved.

In order to make use of these general theoretical approaches to understand Polish trade union involvement in the ETUC, it is necessary to put them in the context of the complex history of the Polish trade unions. As remarked by Gardawski *et al.* (2012a: 11), the enduring features of Polish trade unionism are its chronic fragmentation based on political divisions and the combination of economic struggle with a variety of social and political objectives. The current Polish trade unions emerged as a 'product of the interplay of the institutional legacies of the past, political and economic reforms after 1989 and the strategies of the main actors in response to these reforms' (*ibid.*). Similar to other trade unions in the communist countries of central and eastern Europe, Polish trade unions after 1945 were centralised and legally and practically subordinated to the Communist Party. The communist trade union confederation *Zrzeszenie Związków Zawodowych* (ZZZ, Association of Trade Unions) led by *Centralna Rada Związków Zawodowych* (CRZZ, Central Trade Union Council) was the only trade union in Poland in 1949–1980 (Gardawski *et al.* 2012a). The confederation was a member of the World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU), which from 1949 'remained under the total control of the USSR' and 'constituted the political vanguard of Soviet foreign policy in civil society' (Gallin 2013: 79). Thus, the international involvement of ZZZ and other communist trade union confederations in central and eastern Europe was largely subordinated to the political goals of the ruling, (nominally) communist parties.

The desire to democratise the trade unions in Poland was advanced in successive working class uprisings (in 1956, 1970, 1976 and 1980). The creation of the first independent trade union, NSZZ *Solidarność* in the wake of strikes in June and August 1980 was a turning point in both Polish political history and industrial relations and the history of international relations of the Polish unions. The trust-building processes involving intensive contacts between NSZZ *Solidarność* and western European trade union movements started

in the 1980s. The latter developments are also important for understanding the central role of internal, historical and political factors in shaping the pathways to the ETUC. The unresolved problem of NSZZ Solidarność property confiscated by the communist authorities in the 1980s and passed to OPZZ were used by NSZZ Solidarność to effectively block OPZZ's membership of the ETUC. In this respect, the final accession of OPZZ (and later on of FZZ) to the ETUC was not simply the outcome of cost-benefit considerations, but also the result of trade union identity changes and evolving power relations between the main trade unions in Poland, reflecting the changing economic and political situation in the country. In Section 3 we shall examine these arguments in more detail, based on historical data.

3. Polish pathways to the ETUC: historical contexts, actors, developments

For the sake of clarity of presentation, the history of the relationship of the Polish trade unions with the ETUC can be roughly divided into three phases: (i) the early phase of international contacts of NSZZ Solidarność and OPZZ in 1980–1989 (1984– for OPZZ); (ii) the phase before Poland's accession to the European Union, which was marked by sharp inter-union conflict between NSZZ Solidarność and OPZZ over the latter's membership of the ETUC (1989–2004); (iii) the phase of 'normalisation' and increasing cooperation of NSZZ Solidarność, OPZZ and FZZ (since 2012) within the ETUC (2006 onwards). In the following sections, the three phases will be discussed and supplemented by a special section on the Polish trade unions' involvement in EU enlargement, as the latter was connected with the history of their relations with the ETUC.

3.1. Prologue: the international activities of NSZZ Solidarność and OPZZ in the 1980s

In the short period of its legal existence under Communist rule, from 15 September 1980 to 13 December 1981, NSZZ Solidarność quickly established international links. In June 1981, the union was invited for the 67th Session of the International Labour Organisation in Geneva as the first independent trade union from central and eastern Europe for 30 years. At the turn of 1980/81, it established an international office to coordinate its international relations. It also established working contacts with a range of European trade unions (cf. Goddeeris 2006: 333). The independent trade union also cooperated with the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) and the World Confederation of Labour (WCL). An important factor that fostered exchange with WCL was the fact that its general secretary (in 1974–1988) was Jan Kułakowski, who emigrated from Poland to Belgium in 1946. The ICFTU and WCL were invited for the first National Convention of Delegates of NSZZ Solidarność in Gdańsk on 5–10 September and 26 September–7 October.

The first Convention of NSZZ Solidarność passed the 'Appeal of the First Convention of Delegates to workers in Eastern Europe'. In the Appeal the delegates expressed their solidarity with workers in central and eastern European countries and the Soviet Union:

As the first independent trade union in our post-war history we feel a deep community of fate and assure you that contrary to lies spread in your countries we are an authentic

10 million-strong organisation of workers that emerged as a result of workers' strikes. Our goal is the struggle for a better life for all workers. We support all of you who decided to start the difficult struggle for free trade unionism. (ES, *Posłanie*, translation AM)

The Appeal was one of the first attempts to co-shape the democratic reforms in central and eastern Europe by the union. Unsurprisingly, it was condemned by the ruling Communist Party, which defined it as an attempt to spread anti-communist movements. *Pravda*, the press organ of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, called the Convention of NSZZ Solidarność an 'anti-socialist and anti-Soviet orgy' (ES, *Posłanie*).

The legal existence of NSZZ Solidarność ended with the introduction of martial law on 13 December 1981. The activity of all trade unions (both NSZZ Solidarność and ZZZ) was suspended, their property confiscated and workers' strikes crushed by the army and special police forces. A wave of arrests of NSZZ Solidarność activists followed. The international response to these events by trade union movements involved mass demonstrations in many countries, among others in France (50,000–100,000 people demonstrated in Paris on 14 December 1981), the United Kingdom, Sweden, Norway, the United States and others, as well as declarations of support from the ICFTU and WCL (Goddeeris 2006: 315). Along with the creation of its clandestine structures in Poland (Temporary Coordination Commission of NSZZ Solidarność (TKK), NSZZ Solidarność founded offices abroad, including in Belgium (Brussels), France (Paris), Germany (Bremen), Italy (Rome), the Netherlands (Amsterdam), Switzerland (Zurich) and Sweden (Stockholm). On 17–19 July 1982 the Coordinating Office of NSZZ Solidarność was established in Brussels to coordinate the activities of union offices in various countries. 'The Ministry of Foreign Affairs' of NSZZ Solidarność (Goddeeris 2006), led by Jerzy Milewski (July 1982–December 1990) and subordinated to the TKK, was responsible, among other things, for maintaining international contacts and transferring money, publications and equipment (such as printing devices) donated by foreign trade unions to NSZZ Solidarność. The Coordinating Office was supported with the financial help of foreign trade unions. Its employees in Brussels were employed by the ICFTU and the WCL (ES, *Biuro*).

On 10 November 1982, a joint meeting took place in Brussels between the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC), WCL and ICFTU. This was probably the first official event in which the ETUC got involved in the issues of the Polish independent trade unions. The ETUC, WCL and ICFTU passed a resolution on granting financial support for NSZZ Solidarność, including its Coordinating Office and limiting contacts with trade unions that did not recognise NSZZ Solidarność. The total financial help acquired by NSZZ Solidarność in Poland in the 1980s amounted to USD 5.5 million plus USD 1.2 million for the expenses of the Coordinating Office in Brussels and USD 4.5 million from a US Congress subsidy (Wolańska 2008: 48). The largest part of this financial help came from the AFL-CIO, which made use of funds from the US government via the National Endowment for Democracy, a private, non-profit organisation (Goddeeris 2006: 330). Among the international unions, the largest amount of money was transferred by ICFTU.

ICFTU, WCL (via Jan Kułakowski) and the ETUC were involved in practical and political help for NSZZ Solidarność and continued to issue joint statements in its support throughout the 1980s (for example, in August 1985). Trying to avoid the political choice between membership to the ICFTU and the WCL, from the end of 1985 NSZZ Solidarność made a first attempt to join the ETUC, which was considered to be more 'neutral' (interview I1). However, its efforts were informally rejected because the ETUC only covered

trade unions belonging to the European Community and represented western European workers (Goddeeris 2006: 338–339). This led to the efforts to acquire joint membership of ICFTU and WCL. Initially, the idea had been to affiliate to ICFTU only (Wolańska 2008: 83), but following the advice of Jan Kułakowski NSZZ Solidarność applied to both organisations. WCL, as a Christian Democratic confederation, was closer to NSZZ Solidarność, but ICFTU granted more substantial financial support. The double affiliation was an exception (previously granted only to the Basque trade union ELA/STV) and was crucial for legitimising the position of the clandestine NSZZ Solidarność in front of the Polish authorities. NSZZ Solidarność became the member of WCL on 10 November 1986 and of ICFTU on 19 November 1986.

Meanwhile, the trade union landscape in Poland had changed as a result of the new Trade Union Act of 8 October 1982. The Act was the basis for establishing ‘new’/reformed trade unions from the company level through the federation level and up to the level of the confederation. It annulled all prior registrations of trade unions, including NSZZ Solidarność. In November 1984, the founding congress of a new trade union confederation, *Ogólnopolskie Porozumienie Związków Zawodowych* (OPZZ, the All-Poland Alliance of Trade Unions) took place in the city of Bytom. The ‘reformed’ union recognised the leading role of PZPR (Polish United Workers’ Party, the ruling communist party). An amendment to the Trade Union Act, passed in parliament in July 1985, confirmed the monopoly of OPZZ in enterprises by prohibiting the establishment of more than one union in a company. The Trade Union Act also created the basis for the transfer of the material assets of all trade unions dissolved after 13 December 1981 to the newly established trade unions. This political decision created the main source of tensions among NSZZ Solidarność and OPZZ for the next 23 years (Gardawski *et al.* 2012a: 32).²

There are few documents on the international links of OPZZ in its early days. Undoubtedly, the new ‘reformed’ union found it difficult to establish itself in the international arena due to strong counter-activity by NSZZ Solidarność. On 10 November 1982, WCL, ETUC and ICFTU also declared that contacts with all ‘new’ trade unions that did not recognise NSZZ Solidarność would be limited. In December 1984, ICFTU issued a statement declaring that NSZZ Solidarność (not OPZZ) was the only trade union representing workers in Poland (Goddeeris 2006: 343). The confederation joined WFTU during the 33rd Session of the confederation office on 16–18 April 1985 (Sołtysiak 2004: 60; Kalendarium 2009: 103). Simultaneously, the union established working links with some western European and Nordic trade unions, including the Swedish LO and Austrian ÖGB (Goddeeris 2006: 340). The process of obtaining international recognition for the OPZZ was slow, but some progress was made. For instance, according to Goddeeris (2006: 340), the Swedish LO ‘demanded that the minutes of the ETUC conference include a note about a thaw in relations with OPZZ’. In general, the attitudes of Nordic (Swedish, Norwegian and Finnish) trade unions were contradictory and marked by selective support for both OPZZ and NSZZ Solidarność (Goddeeris 2006: 339–342). In June 1989, OPZZ president Alfred Miodowicz presented the union’s position on the changes in Poland during the 76th Session of the ILO in Geneva, which was a sign that the ‘reformed’ union had gained legitimacy.

2. In practice, the property of NSZZ Solidarność was transferred to OPZZ, based on Article 54(1) of the Act which stated that the property of the Association of Trade Unions (ZZZ, pre-1980 ‘communist’ confederation) and ‘other trade unions which existed before the date of entering this Act into force’ (that is, NSZZ Solidarność) was to be transferred to a temporary administration and, next, to the OPZZ.

3.2. The circuitous routes of NSZZ Solidarność and OPZZ to the ETUC (1989–2004)

On 17 April 1989, as a result of the round table talks between the opposition and the government (6 February 1989–5 April 1989), NSZZ Solidarność was re-registered. On 4 June 1989 the first partially free parliamentary elections took place in Poland, won by the anti-communist opposition. In May 1991, the Acts on Trade Unions, the Act on Resolving Collective Disputes and the Act on Employers' Associations were passed and laid the foundations for contemporary Polish employment relations. NSZZ Solidarność entered a new phase of its development with a dual identity: as a political mainstay of democratic and market reforms and as a trade union movement (Gardawski *et al.* 2012a: 34). The OPZZ, in turn, became more oriented to the traditional trade union role, but its position was undermined by its legacy as a state-socialist union established as an ally of management and depending on (quickly eroding) company resources (Crowley and Ost 2001).

Both NSZZ Solidarność and OPZZ experienced a strong erosion of their membership as a result of both structural factors connected with privatisation and closures, as well as neoliberal 'reforms' and their incapacity to effectively transform their strategies in the new market reality. Between 1987 and 2010, estimated trade union density in Poland fell from 38 per cent to 16 per cent (Czarzasty *et al.* 2014). In 2002, a new trade union confederation was created, *Forum Związków Zawodowych* (FZZ, Trade Union Forum) as a result of consolidation attempts by some independent trade unions, mainly in the public sector. Nevertheless, according to rough estimates, at least 15 per cent of the unionised labour force belongs to trade unions not affiliated to the three, nationally representative trade union confederations (NSZZ Solidarność, OPZZ, FZZ) (Gardawski *et al.* 2012b). The low density and fragmentation of Polish trade unionism, its problematic involvement in high-level party politics, the decentralisation and decline in collective bargaining coverage (currently down to 20–25 per cent) and rather inefficient institutions of tripartite social dialogue at the national level (Ost 2009) meant led to significant and gradual decline of trade union power resources at the national level. Arguably, the deteriorating position of trade unions at the local level influenced their attempts to regain some legitimacy and reinforce their local position by international involvement. In addition, with the internationalisation of trade union activities, the 'competitive pluralism' (Gardawski 2003) of the Polish trade unions, involving trade union rivalry for membership at the national level, gained new momentum and became the platform of its expression. Thus, the issue of OPZZ's ETUC membership became a stake in the symbolic and political struggles between the major trade union players in Poland.

At first sight, NSZZ Solidarność's path to the ETUC was relatively smooth. The network of contacts, social and political capital and legitimacy gained in the time of anti-communist opposition, as well as the early international socialisation of NSZZ Solidarność leaders and international activists were the factors supporting quick accession to the ETUC. In the initial phase, the Coordination Office in Brussels (since 1989 subordinated to the union's Foreign Office in the country) served as the main link with WCL, ICFTU and the ETUC. In the early 1990s, the international cooperation of NSZZ Solidarność developed mainly due to financial help and know-how transfer from the western trade unions. However, relations with the international trade union confederations were not unproblematic. The tensions derived from (i) the fact of NSZZ Solidarność's double affiliation to both WCL and ICFTU; (ii) the limited financial contributions of NSZZ Solidarność to both confederations; and (iii) the increasing number of trade unions from central and eastern Europe affiliated to WCL and

ICFTU, which resulted in a decreasing amount of financial support for them individually. In addition, NSZZ Solidarność's uncompromising, anti-communist approach created tensions among actual and potential ICFTU affiliates in central and eastern Europe. An example of unilateral action on the part of NSZZ Solidarność is the Gdańsk Appeal (*Deklaracja Gdańska*), echoing the earlier Appeal to working people in central and eastern Europe. The Appeal was submitted for discussion by NSZZ Solidarność during the international trade union conference in Gdańsk in 1992. It stated that the signatory parties would refrain from cooperation with any trade unions that have communist links or a communist past. While WCL expressed its support for the Appeal, ICFTU did not formally accept it and criticized the one-sided action of NSZZ Solidarność. From the national perspective, the Appeal could be considered a manifestation of the union's political ambitions in central and eastern Europe. However, from the international unionism point of view, it could have reduced the willingness of the 'reformed' trade union confederations from the region to cooperate with ICFTU, a dangerous scenario considering the erosion of trade union membership at the global level.

OPZZ's international position was even more complex. Until February 1997, the union was a member of WFTU (OPZZ president Alfred Miodowicz had a seat on the WFTU board). Simultaneously, its leadership was increasingly aware that 'our membership of WFTU did not fit contemporary Poland' (interview with Wojciech Kaczmarek, in OPZZ 2009: 95). Although the union began its attempts to join ICFTU at the beginning of the 1990s, ICFTU decided in 1993 to avoid contacts with OPZZ until it fulfilled three conditions: (i) it returned the property of NSZZ Solidarność and shared the property of the Central Council of Trade Unions (CRZZ) between NSZZ Solidarność and OPZZ; (ii) it held democratic elections at each level of its organisational structures; and (iii) it dissociated itself from its earlier statements in which it opposed trade union pluralism (Wolańska 2008: 79). The conflict between OPZZ and NSZZ Solidarność on the returning and dividing of trade union assets confiscated in 1981 by the communist authorities was further escalated in 1994. In a communication of 15 June 1994, NSZZ Solidarność submitted a representation under Article 24 of the ILO Constitution alleging Poland's non-compliance with the Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organize Convention, 1948 (No. 87). More precisely, the complaint concerned the failure to implement measures aimed at restituting trade union assets confiscated illegally under martial law. As a result, the ILO called on the Polish government to provide trade unions with a 'complete and definitive legal framework within which the restitution of trade union property, confiscated during martial law, can be effected with the full participation of the organizations concerned' (ILO Report No. 301).

NSZZ Solidarność's position in the ETUC was strengthened in December 1991, when the union acquired the status of observer (together with Czech trade union confederation CS KOS). Following the resolutions of the 7th ETUC Congress in Luxembourg, observer status could be granted to trade unions stemming from the candidate countries to the European Communities (European Union since 1993) or the countries on their way to becoming candidate countries, provided that the trade unions concerned fulfil all other membership criteria. According to A. Adamczyk (Interview I1), the invitation to NSZZ Solidarność came from the ETUC itself. In 1991–1993, the union was involved in the European Trade Union Forum. The Forum was a 'waiting room' for the central and eastern European unions before they could acquire full ETUC membership. It served as a platform of sometimes heavy discussions between western European trade unions and their central and eastern European colleagues on ETUC policy documents. One example was the ETUC document (from 1992)

on the ‘Architecture of trade unions in Europe’, which in its initial version included passages on the need to ‘subject [central and eastern European] trade unions to a political education process for their Europeanization’ (Wolańska 2008: 81). Since NSZZ Solidarność has never considered Poland to be ‘outside’ Europe (Stanowisko KK 177/99), the statements on the need for ‘Europeanization’ were read by the trade union leadership as provocative and unfair. As recalled by A. Adamczyk, ‘we could not imagine anything more arrogant, so we were outraged and this document was changed’.

In January 1996, NSZZ Solidarność became a full member of the ETUC. Two years later, in December 1998, OPZZ also formally applied for membership of the ETUC. The deputy president of the OPZZ, Jan Guz, passed the letter of intent to the president of the ETUC, Fritz Verzetnisch. However, the OPZZ application was blocked by NSZZ Solidarność, which referred to similar arguments in the case of ICFTU. As recalled by Ryszard Łepik, former deputy president of OPZZ responsible for international affairs (1994–2006), the counter-actions of NSZZ Solidarność made it difficult for OPZZ to enter the international trade union movement in general, including the ETUC and some bilateral relations between unions. Basically, OPZZ regarded NSZZ Solidarność’s accusations as unjust. In the interviews with OPZZ representatives (Interviews I3, I4), it was emphasized that the issue of union property was ‘resolved’ in 1997 as a result of changes in the Trade Union Act. In this context, Ryszard Łepik suggested (Interview I4) that NSZZ Solidarność approach was politically driven as the union could not agree to a compromise with the ‘postcommunist’ OPZZ before the parliamentary elections in 2001. Indeed, the local political context might have mattered. NSZZ Solidarność was involved in the coalition of the Solidarność Electoral Action (AWS) in 1997–2001, which carried out four painful reforms (of state administration, education, health care and pensions) in 1999. Meanwhile, the OPZZ was one of the main forces that contested the reforms, so allowing its membership of the ETUC might have reinforced its position at the local level. However, referring to the ‘resolution’ of the problem of trade union property, it is sometimes forgotten that the main unresolved point of conflict concerned the Employee Holiday Fund (FWP, *Fundusz Wczasów Pracowniczych*), which managed the recreational facilities of the OPZZ.³

In fact, the conflict over property was not resolved until the mid-2000s and effectively blocked successive OPZZ attempts to join the ETUC. In March 2003, the presidency of the OPZZ recommended waiting with the next application for ETUC affiliation until the 10th ETUC Congress and to apply ‘under condition of rapid examination of the application and finishing the discussion about trade union property’ (Sprawozdanie OPZZ 2003: 1). In the documents of the International Cooperation and European Integration Section of OPZZ from 2003–2005, the issue of ETUC membership appears only twice: during the meeting with Tom Saxen (Council of Nordic Trade Unions) and Preben Foldberg (Danish LO) in 2003 and the meeting with Károly György from the Hungarian confederation MSZOSZ in 2005. There was also the meeting of Maciej Manicki (the president of the OPZZ) and Czesław Kulesza with the general secretary of the ETUC, Emilio Gabaglio in Brussels on

3. Regarding the issue of FWP, NSZZ Solidarność appealed to the Constitutional Tribunal of the Republic of Poland against the decision and won the case in June 1998. However, OPZZ and NSZZ Solidarność could not agree on whether to divide the FWP into two companies (the option proposed by NSZZ Solidarność), or to give shares to NSZZ Solidarność and keep one company (OPZZ’s stance). It should be mentioned that in 2001 the property of the FWP was transferred to the Foundation ‘Agreement’ (Porozumienie) created by the OPZZ and led by the former president of OPZZ, M. Manicki.

5 December 2002, including a discussion about the situation of OPZZ and its relations to the ETUC.

Partially to counterbalance its unsuccessful attempts to join the ETUC, at the beginning of 2000s the OPZZ began talks about its potential affiliation to CESI. However, it gave them up after observing the problems encountered by the Trade Union Forum (FZZ) in its relations with this confederation (Interviews I2 and I4). The FZZ, the new trade union confederation established in 2002, joined CESI in March 2003, but its relations with it were not entirely satisfactory (Interview I5).⁴ For OPZZ, CESI was a 'side stream' of European trade unionism, while the OPZZ aspired to a more central position (Interview I4). There were also talks between the OPZZ and WCL, which seemed to be open to OPZZ membership. However, these talks broke down when it was clear that the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) was likely to be established as a result of the merger of WCL and ICFTU.

3.3. Polish trade union positions on EU enlargement

An important factor that brought the otherwise politically divided OPZZ and NSZZ Solidarność closer was the orientations of both trade union confederations towards EU enlargement. Due to its full membership of the ETUC, NSZZ Solidarność was more institutionally involved in Polish accession to the EU. In 1997, NSZZ Solidarność established a European Integration Commission, led by Józef Niemiec (1997–1998), the secretary of the union's National Commission in 1997–2003. The European Integration Commission was financially and logistically supported by the ETUC, with an aim of informing union members about integration, cooperating in joint projects with the ETUC and similar commissions from other candidate countries (within the ETUC Working Group for European Integration). Its coordinator also participated in the work of the Joint Consultative Committee (a tripartite structure initiated by the EU's European Economic and Social Committee). Since 2004, the nationally representative Polish trade union confederations – NSZZ Solidarność, OPZZ and FZZ – also got involved in the Economic and Social Committee which, besides influence on European policy-making, gave them a chance to develop new international networks.

The ETUC's support for trade union involvement in EU enlargement was confirmed by the resolution of the 9th General ETUC Congress in Helsinki (29 June 1999–2 July 1999). It considered EU enlargement the most important historical process since the end of the Second World War, which needed trade union participation and institutional reforms of both the EU and the candidate countries. The central role of the social partners in EU enlargement was also stressed during the 10th ETUC congress in Prague (2003). Recognizing the important role of the new CEE members in the ETUC, Józef Niemiec (NSZZ Solidarność), as the first CEE representative, was elected Confederal Secretary of the ETUC, responsible for social protection, disabled people, regional policy and economic and social cohesion, internal market and services of general interest.

4. During the 4th Congress of CESI (in 2004), Wiesław Siewieski, president of FZZ became the vice-president of CESI. CESI paid for the FZZ's membership for the first year, but thereafter the costs of membership were considered too high by the FZZ leadership (Sprawozdanie FZZ 2010: 36). The FZZ claimed that CESI did not 'fulfil the [FZZ] resolutions concerning the qualifications of nurses' (*idem*). On the other hand, the FZZ stopped paying membership fees in the late 2000s and Wiesław Siewieski gave up his vice-presidency. The FZZ formally left CESI in 2011.

Recognition of the positive aspects of EU enlargement is also visible in the documents issued by the OPZZ and NSZZ Solidarność. For instance, in a resolution of the OPZZ 5th Congress in 2002, the union expressed its support for ‘social Europe’, based on the principle of solidarity, and recognized the need to ‘strengthen the role of social dialogue in the European integration process’. The National Commission of NSZZ Solidarność stressed that EU enlargement should go together with the principle of the free movement of workers (Stanowisko KK 190/99) and emphasised the need for the full transposition of EU social standards to new member states (Stanowisko KK 177/99), the relevance of social dialogue in the EU enlargement negotiations and the future use of EU funds (Stanowisko KK 91/99). It also expressed its opposition to ‘imposing transitional periods’ for opening national labour markets for Polish workers (Stanowisko KK 23/2001). The National Commission (Stanowisko KK 5/04) also expressed its opinion on the Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe. It emphasised that the Treaty fulfils some of the union demands, but criticised some of its cultural implications (for example, the lack of direct reference to Christian values as the cultural foundations of the European Union). An important aspect of NSZZ Solidarność involvement in EU matters was related to the fact that Jan Kułakowski, who had close historical links with NSZZ Solidarność, was the government’s plenipotentiary for Poland’s accession negotiations to the European Union.

The real test of transnational trade union solidarity in Europe was the joint mobilisation of western and eastern European trade unions against the Directive on services in the internal market (Directive 2006/123/EC). The culmination of trade union protests was the joint participation of NSZZ Solidarność and OPZZ in the ETUC demonstration in Strasbourg against the Directive on 14 February 2006. In Poland, their involvement in this event was criticised by some employers’ organisations (such as the Business Centre Club) as action against Polish national interests (Interview I2). However, trade unions claimed that the Directive would be equally bad for labour and business as it would create legislative chaos in the EU (Interview I1) and pose a threat to existing wage and working conditions also in Poland if countries with even lower standards joined the EU in the future. In this context, both OPZZ and NSZZ Solidarność demanded renunciation of the country of origin principle which bound service providers in the EU market to respect their country of origin’s regulations.⁵

For some commentators, the Polish trade unions’ involvement in the joint protests against the Bolkenstein (Services) Directive was an indicator of ‘part of the counter-movement against the internationalisation of market relations’; indeed, as a sign of the emergence of a Europe-wide trade union protest movement (Gajewska 2009: 183). Others remained more sceptical (Bernaciak 2011) and stressed that despite ‘higher level congruence between [western and eastern European] union positions on the Services Directive campaign, union cooperation on this issue remains relatively “empty”, as it did not involve contacts between union members from different countries beyond high-ranking union officials’. Putting aside the conflicting interpretations of East–West labour transnationalism, the joint protests of OPZZ and NSZZ Solidarność might also be interpreted in terms of the emerging situational

5. It should be remembered that the trade unions’ ‘victory’ with regard to the Bolkenstein directive was conditional. As remarked by Meardi (2012: 171), despite removing the country of origin principle from the directive, much of this principle ‘was then silently, and undemocratically, reintroduced by the European Court of Justice (ECJ) in its interpretations of the Posted Worker Directive in the *Laval*, *Rüffert* and *Luxembourg* cases (as well as by the EC in its Communications).’

coalitions between them, something quite new in the Polish context. In this respect, the reference to Europe and the ETUC activities played an important role in bringing the unions together.

3.4. The period of 'normalisation' and cooperation within the ETUC

According to Piotr Ostrowski (I2), the tentative green light for OPZZ's joining the ETUC was given by NSZZ Solidarność in 2004. However, it was not until March 2006 that formal acceptance was granted. Meanwhile, a range of informal and formal talks between the OPZZ leadership and the ETUC affiliates took place to support its membership, including bilateral contacts with the Hungarian MSZOSZ, the German DGB, the Austrian ÖGB, the French CGT or Danish LO, to mention just a few (Kronika Związkowa 45(931)/2006). The Friedrich Ebert Foundation office in Warsaw (in the period of the director of the Warsaw office in 1999–2005, Clemens Rhode) also actively lobbied for OPZZ membership of the ETUC (interview I2).

Although the problem of trade union property had not been fully solved, several factors reduced the tensions between OPZZ and NSZZ Solidarność and created conditions for their cooperation within the ETUC. The first was Poland's EU accession in 2004 and the need for closer cooperation between trade union confederations at the national level, related, among other things, to the need to elaborate joint positions in the negotiation and implementation of EU legislation. The second was an uneven, but visible process of relaxing the NSZZ Solidarność and OPZZ links with political parties as a result of the electoral defeats of Solidarność Electoral Action (AWS) in 2001 and the Democratic Left Alliance (a post-communist social democratic party with links to OPZZ) in 2005. The third factor was (again rather gradual) generational change among the Polish trade union leadership which limited the relevance of historical arguments in trade union rivalry. Finally, with the passing of time, the situational alliances among trade unions (also at lower structural levels) have been increasingly shaped by their joint opposition to some changes in labour legislation, such as the 'flexibilisation' of the Labour Code in 2002–2003. In the late 2000s, these factors were reinforced by the emergence of a common trade union 'front' (involving OPZZ, FZZ and NSZZ Solidarność) against the government of the Civic Platform (in office from 2007 until 2015).

The creation of the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) on 31 October 2006–1 November 2006 symbolically ended part of the international history of Polish unionism. NSZZ Solidarność became one of the founding members of the new confederation and the president of OPZZ, Jan Guz, was also invited to the founding congress. Due to its double affiliation, the need to merge WCL and ICFTU was voiced by NSZZ Solidarność from the mid-1990s (cf. resolutions of the National Commission from 1998 in Wolańska 2009: 140). At the ETUC level, both NSZZ Solidarność and OPZZ representatives became increasingly involved in the work of the confederation. During the Athens congress (in May 2011), Józef Niemiec (NSZZ Solidarność) was re-elected Deputy General Secretary of the ETUC. In December 2009, Tomasz Jasiński, representing the Youth Committee of the OPZZ, was elected president of the ETUC Youth Committee.

The process of including the nationally representative trade union confederations from Poland to the ETUC was completed in March 2012, when the Trade Union Forum (FZZ) was accepted as a new affiliate to the ETUC. The FZZ's efforts to join the ETUC started in 2010 with the election of new FZZ president, Tadeusz Chwałka (interview I5). The formal

talks about the application took place in 2011 during the FZZ Presidium meetings. They were accompanied by informal talks with OPZZ and NSZZ Solidarność to get their support for FZZ membership (interview I5). In order to secure necessary financial resources, the membership fee for FZZ affiliates was raised (starting from 2012) from 20 groszy (5 eurocents) to 30 groszy (7.5 eurocents) per member, to try to finance the cooperation and an office (one full-time position) responsible for international relations. The office is now led by ex-OPZZ representative and president of the ETUC Youth Committee, Tomasz Jasiński. According to all interviewees (representing FZZ, OPZZ and NSZZ Solidarność), NSZZ Solidarność and OPZZ supported the FZZ in its attempts to join the ETUC and in this sense the process was much smoother than in the case of OPZZ's application.

The culmination of the international cooperation of NSZZ Solidarność, OPZZ and FZZ was the organisation of the joint ETUC euro-demonstration in Wrocław on 17 September 2011 under the slogan 'Yes to European solidarity, yes to jobs and workers' rights, no to austerity'. The demonstration coincided with a meeting of European finance ministers and had between 20,000 and 50,000 participants (Trawińska 2011). During the meeting of the trade union Visegrád Group in October 2012, FZZ, OPZZ and NSZZ Solidarność decided to harmonise their involvement in international activities, including the division of seats in ETUC negotiating teams (interview I2). The interviews with the trade union officers responsible for international cooperation in NSZZ Solidarność (Interview I1), OPZZ (Interview I2) and FZZ (interview I5) clearly suggest that the working relations between all three Polish unions affiliated to the ETUC are fairly satisfactory. Taking into account the complicated history of Polish unionism, this assessment can be considered an important step towards a stronger representation of Polish workers' interests at the international level.

4. Conclusions

At the beginning of this chapter, a question was asked about the possible impact of Polish trade unions' membership of the ETUC on their internal transformation, as well as on the changes within the ETUC itself. Addressing the first part of the question, it can be argued that the Polish trade union involvement in the ETUC and, more broadly, in the international trade union movement was an important factor fostering greater unification of trade unionism at the national level. It also helped to bring about internal organisational changes within trade union organisations. As indicated by interviewees (interviews I2, I5), reference to the ETUC helped to promote and legitimise internal changes in Polish unions, such as the simplification of the branch structure of OPZZ to reflect the European Trade Union Federation structures (in 2006) or increasing fees paid by the affiliates to FZZ to finance its international activities (since 2012). In the case of NSZZ Solidarność, the 'branch' structures of the union (introduced in early 1990s) were 'copied' from ICFTU's sectoral structures. International involvement also made it necessary to bring a new generation of experts and union activists to trade unions, such as Piotr Ostrowski (OPZZ) and Tomasz Jasiński (OPZZ and now FZZ). Finally, ETUC membership contributed to the increasing professionalisation of the international activities of all three confederations. This is exemplified by the FZZ's plans to create a foreign office and the greater formalisation of the division of seats in the ETUC negotiating teams among all three Polish confederations.

It is more difficult to give a definite answer to the question about the influence of the Polish trade unions on the transformation of the ETUC itself. Without doubt, the

participation of the CEE affiliates in the ETUC presented a challenge. It increased the heterogeneity of the interests and values with which it had to cope in order to survive as an efficient interest representative organisation at the European level. The very idea of the 'Europeanisation' of the CEE trade unions has been contested by them on the (arguably legitimate) ground that they have never ceased to be 'European'. Simultaneously, they entered (or made efforts to enter) the ETUC with far fewer resources than their western counterparts and equipped with their historical, local trade union identities and ideologies. The latter had to be mitigated and reconciled with the interests and values of existing and prospective members. At the organisational level, the ETUC proved to be fairly open to meeting at least some of these challenges. Under the influence of NSZZ Solidarność and central and eastern European trade unions, the creation of observer membership status in 1991 allowed the central and eastern European unions to join the ETUC before they formally gained the status of EU candidate countries. In addition, the lobbying by NSZZ Solidarność and other CEE affiliates made it possible to lower the membership fees in the ETUC to 25 per cent of the full fees (at the beginning of the 1990s) (currently around 40 per cent); the latter reform enabled fuller participation of trade unions from the poorer central and eastern European countries.

Much more debatable is whether the ETUC's identity has changed as a result of the inclusion of new CEE affiliates in the past 20 years. On one hand, it is often emphasised that the lines of division in the ETUC do not (anymore?) coincide with the east–west demarcation line (interviews I1, I2), but also involve other 'regional' coalitions, such as the Nordic or southern European countries. On the other hand, the 'flagship' case of European east–west solidarity – the joint protests against the Service Directive in 2006 – remains rather isolated.⁶ It has also been criticised on the grounds of being a top-down rather than a bottom-up initiative, which did not signify the emergence of new, European labour transnationalism (Bernaciak 2011). Although the formal integration of the CEE affiliates to the ETUC has been largely and successfully completed, more time and efforts are needed to construct a polycentric identity for European unionism.

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6. Nevertheless, some other cases of east–west trade union cooperation could be noted; for instance, the joint demonstrations of all unions against the common European agenda of austerity in Ljubljana (2008) and Wrocław (2011).

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- I1: Interview with Andrzej Adamczyk, the chief of the International Bureau (since 1992), NSZZ
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- I2: Interview with Dr Piotr Ostrowski, the chief of the International Cooperation and European
Integration Section of OPZZ (since 2006).
- I3: Interview with Lech Kańtoch, former employee of the International Cooperation and European
Integration Section OPZZ.
- I4: Interview with Ryszard Łepik, former deputy president of the OPZZ (1994–2006) responsible for
international affairs, phone interview, 12 November 2012.
- I5: Interview with Tadeusz Chwałka, the president of the FZZ (Trade Union Forum), in 2010-2015,
Katowice, 26 November 2012.
- I6: Interview with Józef Niemiec, the deputy General Secretary of the ETUC, Brussels,
07 December 2012.

Conclusion

Andrea Ciampani and Pierre Tilly

It is only in Europe that the trade union movement has acquired a truly transnational dimension. This publication opens the door to further research, and the study and interpretation of this historic journey will be an invaluable asset in the construction of European trade unionism today, as led by the work of the ETUC.

Democratic trade unionism has had an important part in European integration, particularly in relation to its capacity for social representativeness vis-à-vis the European Commission and European employers' organisations. European integration, from the Schuman Plan in 1950 to the Maastricht Social Protocol in 1992 and beyond, has helped to change trade union action in the EU Member States, at different times and in different ways according to the specific history of each of these unions. The involvement of trade union confederations in the European project from the outset, and particularly since the creation of the ETUC, has given them the stature of European social partners with the capacity to strive for and to implement a 'social Europe' project; this in turn has contributed to the unique nature of the European Union.

There is no doubt that there have been many instances of resistance and contradiction throughout this process of integration, but the involvement of organised civil society and, in particular, the trade union movement in European decision-making on economic and social matters remains the central issue. The future direction of research into European trade unionism must therefore be more towards the analysis of its various levels of action in Europe (starting from the local level) and how they link together.

Historical research cannot be left on the sidelines in the study of the institutional processes of the EU. Furthermore, European trade unionism cannot be

reduced to a simple institutional lobby group, as this would deny its originality and specific features, such as the depth of its social project. An overly simplistic or modelled approach to social relations, ignoring the developments and changes wrought by history, is of only limited use. Equally inadequate would be a historical research restricted to the production of studies that merely set out the views, recommendations and positions of the national trade union federations and the ETUC, even though these may be comprehensive and reveal important contemporary challenges.

It would be more relevant to outline, with the necessary critical rigour, the objectives of European trade unionism through studying its various components and levels of action (from the company to the regional and interregional level, and from the national sphere to the EU area). The idea behind such an approach would be to carry out a comparison at the European level, fully assessing the impact of actions and instruments – such as the co-ordination between the ETUC and the European trade union federations, the Interregional Trade Union Councils or the European Works Councils – on the daily life of workers. This would require a serious consideration of the degree of influence of the European dimension on each specific trade union organisation. Carrying out such a comparison with the long-term perspective specific to the historian's approach may prove useful in more than one respect: by looking closely at the issue of trade union identity in the workplace, by highlighting the importance of the confederal dimension in terms of reinforcing the weight of trade union action, and by helping to define the outlines of a multilevel social dialogue capable of achieving framework agreements appropriate to the transnational mobility of business.

If we want to see a stronger and more social Europe, which has an influence beyond the borders of the European Union, then a 'virtuous' dynamic of governance and social regulation is required. The rapid and manifold changes brought about by economic and financial globalisation have made this even more essential, and in this respect, it seems vital to recreate an *acquis communautaire* driven by everyone involved. This would allow us to begin a new era, offering a renewed social dynamic at European level. A lucid and retrospective analysis that reveals the reciprocal influences between European integration and the development of trade unionism could lend it meaning and legitimacy, and an understanding of this history would help to confront the present and future challenges facing Europe and its social development. In this way, the European trade union movement has an opportunity to consolidate its historic role as a social partner taking action for the benefit of all workers and citizens in Europe.

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National trade unions and the ETUC: A history of unity and diversity

Andrea Ciampani and Pierre Tilly (eds)

A follow-up to the book *1973-2013: 40 years of history of the European Trade Union Confederation*, this publication looks more closely at how different trade union models, traditions and cultures have come together within this organisation.

As in the first volume, the contributors take a historical perspective, highlighting the determinants, developments and legacies of the relationship that the union confederations have had with the European integration process over a forty-plus year period.

The authors examine the dynamic relationship between the Brussels-based ETUC and its member organisations in ten different EU countries, within the context of the highs and lows of the European integration project. At the same time, they study the possible influence of the ETUC upon these organisations in their home countries, via the unions' international or European departments or through the feedback effects of debates at both the European and national levels.

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