

BLOCKING THE PARTICIPATION? HOW TRADE UNIONS FROM THE CEE AND SEE COUNTRIES HAVE FARED WITH THE EUROPEAN LEVEL COOPERATION - CASE STUDY OF THE EUROPEAN METAL SECTOR

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1 INTRODUCTION

The change trade unions from of the formerly socialist countries in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) and South Eastern Europe (SEE) have endured has been enormous. The greatest challenge has been the almost complete change of way how they have been forced to adopt new mindset as being associations of employees instead of corporations. The change from agents of an enterprise, concentrating on social matters to collective bargaining partners confronted with a profit-oriented management and employers' associations was sudden and they were forced to adopt collective bargaining and industrial actions without any previous experience.

The market economy, competition, privatization, start-up companies and job cuts characterized the early phase in the 1990s and, linked to this, the trade unions' need for a social dialogue with governments and employers in order to renegotiate working conditions and pay. In addition, the CEE-countries were forced to transpose Community law (*acquis communautaire*) and integrate into transnational contexts in the run-up to EU accession. They had to build up new structures of industrial relations in a very short period of time; something that had taken Western Europe decades to develop.

Despite introducing European worker representation directives in the domestic labor legislation, there is still little resembling a vibrant and independent trade union movement. Union membership has declined since the start of the transition (Carley 2009; Kohl 2008; Carley 2004) and most collective bargaining has added little to the minimum standards. A new phenomenon to have surfaced lately is the role of employers in supporting the development of trade unions which are located within and run by a company and are not affiliated with an independent trade union. They utilize the provision of the labor code permitting derogation against the interest of the workers from minimum standards, provided the workers have trade union representation, but are not participating in wider social and economic discussions. On the employer side, weak or non-existent employer associations have made it difficult to establish collective bargaining at the sectoral level.

Until recently, cooperation between trade unions from new and old EU member states was considered to be impossible in the short term, due to the management's race to the bottom strategies (e.g. Marginson 2006; Vaughan-Whitehead 2003). However, also contrary arguments have been made, emphasizing mutual gains from the trade unions' side (e.g. Meardi 2004). Most of the cooperation initiatives have taken place at the company-level (e.g. Kahancova 2009), due to the fact that sectoral level trade unionism is still underdeveloped in most of the CEE-countries. Despite this, even in a competition-driven setting, there is scope for reciprocal exchange between labour organisations from old and new EU member states. As a consequence of cooperation between trade unions, not only East-West underbidding can be contained, but also working conditions at a given subsidiary might improve significantly as a result of Western European unions' intervention. It is more difficult to see

similar developments at the sectoral level due to the weakness of sectoral collective bargaining and limited resources of sectoral union organisations in CEE, meaning weaker overall regulation.

Metal sector has played a significant role in the European integration all the way from the creation of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) in 1951 between six countries in Western Europe. It was also one of the first to add a European dimension to organizing labor, with the creation of the European Metal Committee in 1963 that initially became European Metalworkers' Federation (EMF) in 1971. The first trade unions from the CEE –countries were accepted EMF affiliates in already in 1991 (Buschak 2002), with the goal of engaging them in the European level structures. Due to its nature as export driven sector, the metal sector is vulnerable to outside threats. This has further necessitated the EMF to engage trade unions from all over Europe to a common project of hindering downscaling and wage dumping. Under the conditions of European Single Market the European metalworking industry has undergone a period of dramatic change, both structurally and technologically, as metalworking companies have followed European-wide restructuring strategies and a continuous increase in the number of cross-border mergers and acquisitions that has promoted the development of a genuine European capital.

This paper explores two different aspects of the role and possibilities trade unions from the CEE- and SEE-countries have endured. First, how the trade unions from the CEE and SEE have been included in the decision-making at the European level in the metal sector and how they have fared there. Secondly, and in particular, under which settings cooperation between trade unions from Eastern and Western Europe takes place. After all, on the surface there would seem to be different needs for the trade unions from EU15 and CEE and SEE, due to the vastly different local conditions and the stage they are in. By using the metal sector as a framework for this paper, we are able to test the theoretical hypotheses about membership, collaboration and network structure drawn from the organizational network literature (e.g. Knoke 2008) and institutional entrepreneurship literature (e.g. Garud et al 2007; Leca et al 2008), because, according to Lecher & Rüb (1999), cooperation leading to coordinated union strategies and geocentric unionism has potential to develop into a network of national and transnational industrial relations. The networks studied in this paper are based on self-reported ties and dependencies between the EMF affiliates (n=71). By using blockmodelling, core-periphery models and measuring power positions of the trade unions, we are able to find out how the trade unions are located in the network.

2 THE IMPACT OF EU ENLARGEMENT

For a long time the European level collaboration was seen more as a Western project going parallel with the European Union's deepening integration (Lado 2002; Langewiesche 2002), witnessed by the fact that in steel sector, which is at core of industrial unionism, solidarity among Eastern and Western trade unions was for a long time non-existent (Bacon & Blyton 1996; Meardi 2000). Due to their socialist legacy, many trade unions in the new EU-members states boast large number of members, but are organizationally limited in their ability to represent trade union interests in the European arena (Kohl & Platzer 2004; Pleines 2008), hence a threat of under-representation and as a result of this, also involuntary free riding. On the other hand, in many countries the trade unions have been more concerned about competing with each other than trying to collaborate, thus weakening the strength of the labour movement as a whole. Therefore the Western unions have had difficulties in seeing them as collaboration partners. Still, there is evidence (Kahancova 2009) of vital bilateral union networking gradually developing, since unions see the presence of foreign employers as an important incentive to foster an international union orientation and cross-border exchange of union resources. In general, the trade unions from the Czech Republic, Poland and Slovakia have been the ones with the strongest organizations to cope with the European level representation (Einbock & Lis 2007).

The new EU member states can be divided into three groups, based on their industrial relations system (Kohl & Platzer 2004). The first group includes the Baltic States of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania¹. These former Soviet republics underwent a radical reorientation as small and medium sized enterprises were created and industrial relations were decentralized. These countries had had positive experiences with market-oriented industrial relations with the continued practice of employment law established in the interregnum between the two world wars. The second one, the Visegrad group, includes Poland, Czech Republic, Slovak Republic, and Hungary. This group has had a long tradition of industrialization and trade links with Western Europe and only a recent history as formally independent socialist states within the Soviet Union's geographical arc. Slovenia is considered separately due to its unique characteristics. Initially a socialist market economy with self-managed enterprises and a pluralistic state structure, the market had to be completely reoriented to the EU after independence from the former Yugoslavia. Slovenia's population is better educated relative to the other seven countries and its approach to the transition has been more directed since it maintained the existing structures and innovative, having adapted the EU employment law. The proportion of workers (all sectors) covered by collective bargaining in the EU varies from over 90% to 25%. The countries at the top of the table either have very high levels of union membership, as in the Nordic countries, or have legal structures which ensure that collective agreements have a wide coverage. In the countries at the bottom of the table, company level bargaining dominates. In some countries, such as Belgium, Italy or Sweden, there are links between different levels of bargaining but in others, like Luxembourg or Cyprus, various levels simply co-exist.

Before the EU enlargement in 2005 there were fears of inequalities in living standards and disparities in unemployment that might lead to substantial labour migration, threatening to undermine wages and conditions elsewhere in the EU. Another fear at the time was widespread social dumping, as markedly lower labour costs in the CEE-countries were seen as an impulse for relocating productivity. These prognoses were at the time deemed unlikely (e.g. Marginson & Sisson 2006, 301-305), due to the fact that lower levels of productivity would offset these differences. The evidence showed that real unit labour costs were marginal compared with the wage gap (Boeri & Brücker 2001). Not only labour-hostile management strategies, but also potentially divergent workers' interests were expected to jeopardize the solidarity between trade unions from Eastern and Western Europe. In many manufacturing sectors workers in the CEE profited directly from relocations and foreign direct investment (FDI), while at the same time western workers were faced with the prospect of losing jobs (Telljohann 2005).

The Polish NSZZ Solidarność seemed to be in the most favorable situation prior to EU enlargement, since as a pioneer of the free trade union movement in Eastern Europe, it was recognized by international bodies early on due to the fact that it had managed to establish various institutionalized and non-institutionalized contacts with its European and international counterparts even before the breakdown of the Communist regime in Poland, and being the first trade union from the CEE to become an EMF affiliate (Einbock & Lis 2007; Dimitrova & Petkov 2005) along with trade unions from then Czechoslovakia and Hungary. At the other end are trade unions from ex-Yugoslavia; especially those that are not even EU candidate countries yet. Meanwhile candidate countries (Croatia, Macedonia and Turkey) have made more progress by introducing the European social model and striving for position compatible to the one enjoyed by the trade unions from CEE (Wannöffel et al 2007).

¹ Since none of these countries is represented in the EMF, they have excluded from this study.

3 THEORY OF INSTITUTIONAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP

In the institutional literature, accounts of institutional entrepreneurship have evolved in the last 20 years. The concept of institutional entrepreneurship has emerged to help answer the question of how new institutions arise, representing the activities of actors who have an interest in particular institutional arrangements and who are leveraging resources to create new institutions or transform existing ones (DiMaggio 1988; Rao et al 2000). Majority of studies have concentrated more on relatively mature organizational fields (e.g. Greenwood et al 2002; Lounsbury 2002), but institutional entrepreneurship can also occur in emerging fields (DiMaggio 1991, Garud et al 2002).

Organizational fields are structured systems of social positions within which struggles take place over resources, stakes and access (Bourdieu 1990). The concept of institutional entrepreneurship ships focus on these struggles and the manner in which interested actors influence their institutional context (DiMaggio 1991). Central to institutional entrepreneurship is the relationship between interests, agency and institutions, which arise when organized actors with sufficient resources see in them an opportunity to realize interests that they value highly (DiMaggio 1988). Institutional change is thus a political process that reflects the power and interests of organized actors (Seo & Creed 2002). The concept of institutional entrepreneurship also focuses attention to the fact that not all actors are equally adept at producing desired outcomes (DiMaggio 1988), because an organizational field consists of a limited number of subject positions (Foucault 1972) of which actors can take action (Bourdieu 1990). The normative and structural qualities of these positions provide actors with institutional interests and opportunities (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992).

Studies of institutional entrepreneurship in mature fields tend to associate agency in a field with actors located in obviously dominated positions that can compel other actors to change their practices (Hoffman 1999). However, fields consist of dominant and dominated actors, both of which attempt to steal, exclude and establish monopoly over the mechanisms of the field's reproduction and the type of power effective in it (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992), and in some instances change can be brought about by actors other than those in stereotypically powerful positions.

The situation is different when talking about an emerging field. Research on under-organized domains (e.g. Trist 1983) suggests that, while members recognize some degree of mutual interest, relatively little coordinated action exists among them. Such contexts represent potential networks of organizations, rather than already established ones (Gray 1985). Whereas institutions in mature fields tend to be widely diffused throughout the field and have high levels of acceptance among actors, emerging fields are more likely to be characterized by proto-institutions, which are more narrowly diffused and only weakly entrenched (Lawrence et al 2002).

The characteristics of emerging fields make them an important arena for the study of institutional entrepreneurship for three reasons. First, uncertainty in the institutional order provides considerable scope for institutional entrepreneurs to be strategic and opportunistic (DiMaggio 1988), in the case of actors in dominated and dominating positions (Hardy 1994). Second, Emerging fields promise considerable rewards for success due to their structuring that provides some of the actors with significant advantages (Garud et al 2002). Third, emerging fields present a different set of challenges than those posed by more structured fields. For example, isomorphic pressure will be less relevant if there are no established patterns or leaders to mimic, since widely shared values associated with normative forces are yet to develop. Also, diffuse power makes it difficult for individual actors to coerce others. Consequently institutional entrepreneurs in emerging fields must devise and maintain stable sets of agreements in ways that meet the interests of a diverse set of stakeholders, and without

access to the taken-for-granted symbolic and material resources and institutionalized channels of diffusion that are normally available in mature fields.

4 METHODOLOGY AND RESULTS

In a first step the data will be presented for the overall network, including all the 71 actors. Since there is only partial information on information exchange due to the incomplete response rate (61 %) for the overall network, the data were symmetrized with the maximum approach. This is to assume that a link between two communication partners exists if at least one in a dyad is reporting such an exchange.

4.1 Structural Equivalence, Competitive and Cooperative Relations

Two different tendencies of cross-border trade unionism can be observed in Europe: a cooperative one, applicable to relations between national- and sectoral level unions, and a competitive one that takes place in the interaction of company level trade unions (Kahancova 2009). International trade unionism ranges from non-binding declarations of international solidarity to cross-border coordination of collective bargaining (Bernaciak 2008). Cooperation refers interaction between trade unions on the basis of congruent sets of preferences, driven by or leading to shared value norms. Despite their different backgrounds, the trade unions' interests in cooperation go beyond national embeddedness, seeking to develop a real international form. According to Lecher & Rüb (1999), cooperation leading to coordinated trade union strategies and geocentric trade unionism has the highest potential to make them influential actors in the network of national and transnational industrial relations. Cooperation can evolve around weaker forms of networking, like information-sharing as well as normal regular contacts with trade unions from other countries without a clear strategy of coordination at European level. Apart from official networks and unofficial networks, also so called un-networks have emerged (e.g. Hardy 1994; Trist 1983). These are typical for emerging fields, where members might not be aware of mutual interests. This paper argues that it is how these un-networks develop that dictates the future of East-West collaboration in the metal sector, since they are less prone to hierarchical structures, concentrating instead on actual needs in creating the rules for the institutional settings.

Competition as a form of cross-border union interaction entails rivalry between different trade unions in face of international competition for investments, threats of capital relocation, and against worsening of working standards and pay levels. When competing, the trade unions are not committed to compromise in their interests in face of foreign trade unions, instead only trying to pursue their own national interests. This is bound to lead to decreasing trust and weaker commitment to mutual agreements. Competition can take many forms, from open rivalry to weaken forms of competition, such as non-existing contacts and a lack of initiatives in seeking union partners abroad (Kahancova 2009).

In the network literature (e.g. Knoke & Yang 2008) the equivalence of actors is defined as two or more actors having identical or very similar relations with others in a network. Structurally equivalent actors typically have a competitive, rather than a cohesive relation, since they are basically competing for the same resources. Structurally equivalent actors are also completely substitutable for one another, leaving the original network structure unchanged. Perfect substitutability in a network often generates fierce competition to obtain favorable responses from other network participants. Several sources of imbalance contribute to the lack of structural equivalence (Kohl 2008). First, in CEE-countries the state continues to play a dominant role in determining remuneration systems, which are influenced by existing minimum wage levels and working conditions. Secondly, with few exceptions, bargaining policy at sectoral level either completely non-existent or seriously under-developed, with company agreements being predominant in parallel with a limited willingness and ability to take industrial action due to sometimes extremely restrictive strike legislation. Simultaneously collective agreements are

largely not binding. Thirdly, on one hand the increase of small and medium-sized companies (SMEs) has made the presence of trade unions at work places more fragmented, as has the increased the number of non-unionized companies in contrast to the previous closed shops. On the other hand large multinational companies (MNCs) have their own works councils that despite the resistance from the trade unions have taken over their role. Due to the dominance of company-level bargaining the organizational structure of sectoral trade unions has remained weak. Nowadays, the executive office of many sectoral trade unions and smaller confederations often consists of only a couple of officers. This has been further hastened by the fact that revenues from membership fees are distributed in a different manner than is common for the trade unions in the west (Kohl 2008), with 60-90 % of the fees remaining with the organization at the company-level and only 10-30 % going to the sectoral level union. These issues together have been the main reasons for underperformance of trade unions from the CEE-countries.

In this paper, three different measurements have been created to study the performance of the trade unions from the CEE. The first one is based on their activity and size in comparison to the average activity and size of all the actors in the metal sector. Here we have named this strength index (Table 3) that is a developed version of power reputation (e.g. Schneider 2005). The aim of this index is to measure power positions and influence the trade unions possess over the network. Influence reputation is a concept to measure power and influence by the survey method. It tries to find out, which actor or which actors in a specified actor population are regarded as most powerful or influential. In reality, this model does not examine the actual power of an actor, but rather conducts a kind of “opinion research” on power, since it is based on other actors’ opinion of an actor’s position in a network. In order to have power over other actors, actualized power resources are not always necessary. The mere belief that an actor disposes of specific instruments of power can produce a comparable effect on “actual” power (Ibid.). If one accepts the assumption that the predominant opinion within an actor population on the power of certain actors in the policy development represents their actual influence in the policy process, then power reputation can be used as an empirical proxy to represent real power.

The second measurement is a continuum to the strength index, measuring over- and underperformance of the trade unions at the European level. This is constructed by comparing the strength index with estimated strength index. It helps to give us a relational view of how the trade unions perform. Evidenced by Table 1, the German trade union is overwhelmingly the most influential trade union, also in regards to its size measured by membership, overperforming by 80 %. When dividing the trade unions into groups, based on region, we notice that the EU15 grouping is performing better, than the EU7 or non-EU ones. These findings support the notion made by Dimitrova & Petkov (2005) about insufficient expert capacity. However, they maintain that inter-union cooperation has proved an important means of gaining the maximum benefit from scarce human resources (Ibid.). As prime example of this have been the Hungarian trade unions, who have found a way to allocate their representatives to different international forums to better maximize their national interests.

Table 1. EMF Affiliates' Potential "Strength" = membership x share avg. (2428:10 = 100).

Affiliate	Members 2008-11	Strength index (avg = 100)	over- / under- performance (%)	Affiliate	Members 2008-11	Strength index (avg = 100)	Over- / under- performance (%)
GER1	1 700 000	4061.0	+80.4	UK3	20 000	4.1	-84.2
UK1	422 000	573.6	+2.6	BEL4	20 000	26.4	+1.5
SWE2	272 636	280.7	-22.2	LUX1	20 000	18.9	-27.3
ITA1	200 000	115.3	-56.5	ROM1	14 800	3.1	-84.5
AUT1	175 000	100.9	-56.5	MKD1	17 352	5.7	-75.2
DEN1	170 000	385.1	+71.2	DEN2	16 000	13.8	-34.3
CZE1	160 810	106.0	-50.3	SWI2	16 000	0.7	-96.7
BEL2	160 000	92.3	-56.5	NOR3	16 000	7.9	-62.4
FIN1	125 000	133.9	-18.8	NOR4	15 000	4.9	-75.5
SWE3	121 000	79.7	-50.2	GRE1	12 451	3.6	-77.5
ITA2	100 000	32.9	-75.1	FRA6	12 000	5.4	-66.3
SPA1	100 000	49.4	-62.6	FRA7	12 000	2.0	-87.5
SPA2	100 000	61.8	-53.2	FIN3	11 500	5.7	-62.0
BEL1	91 000	112.4	-6.3	ROM3	11 000	5.0	-66.7
UK4	80 000	16.5	-74.5	MNE1	6 500	0.8	-91.2
NED1	80 000	69.2	-34.7	BEL5	10 870	3.6	-25.2
BEL3	80 000	82.4	-22.3	ROM2	10 800	2.3	-83.6
FRA3	80 000	49.4	-53.4	NED4	10 000	0.4	-96.9
FRA1	76 000	34.4	-65.9	NED2	10 000	4.9	-62.3
ITA3	75 000	68.0	-31.3	NOR2	10 000	1.2	-90.8
FRA5	68 000	131.6	+46.2	FIN4	10 000	4.5	-65.4
POL1	60 000	37.1	-53.0	FIN5	10 000	4.1	-68.5
SWI1	57 293	16.5	-78.3	FRA2	10 000	1.2	-89.8
POR2	50 500	8.3	-87.6	FRA4	10 000	3.3	-74.6
NOR1	46 700	44.2	-28.7	IRL1	10 000	0.4	-96.9
SVK1	43 215	19.6	-65.6	ICE1	10 000	1.6	-87.7
SLO1	35 935	38.5	-19.8	MAL1	10 000	1.2	-90.8
POR1	30 000	47.0	+17.5	BiH1	12 300	5.1	-68.1
SER1	30 000	8.6	-78.5	TUR1	10 000	2.1	-83.8
HUN1	29 800	23.3	-19.7	POL2	10 000	1.6	-87.7
SPA3	27 000	1.1	-97.0	BUL1	8 200	6.4	-41.8
UK2	25 000	11.3	-65.8	KOS1	6 270	3.6	-55.0
SWE1	23 000	17.1	-43.0	BUL2	4 612	1.9	-68.3
NED3	22 500	4.7	-84.3	BUL3	5 000	0.8	-88.6
FIN2	22 000	10.9	-62.4	CYP1	4 000	0.8	-84.0
CRO1	21 735	17.0	-41.4				

Share = centrality measure of the actor divided by the sum of all the actor centralities in the network.

Strength avg. = (Membership x share) SUM / 71

Strength index = (Membership x share) / (Membership x share) AVG.

Although SEE-countries have had bilateral contacts with trade unions from EU15, with the aim of transferring knowledge and skills from West to East (e.g. Gradev 2005), this has not helped them to overcome fully the distance to CEE-countries that are beginning to stand on their own feet (Table 2). In adopting actor-centered approach, Bernaciak (2010) found out that close cooperative links are emerging as a result of socialization among labour representatives from different countries. Marginson et al. (2004) have shown that the European Works Councils that have the most influence on the management decisions could be found at companies where prior contacts between trade unionists and active networking were present.

Table 2. Over- and underperformance of trade unions

	Over- / under-performance (avg. %)
EU15 + EEA + CYP+ MAL+ SWI	-51.5
EU7 (CEE)	-60.8
non-EU	-70.5

The third measurement is a bit less analytical, looking into how the trade unions are represented at the EMF committees and Select Working parties. EMF has currently three policy committees (Industrial Policy, Collective Bargaining Policy and Company Policy), which include members from 52 affiliates. These committees act more as forums for the affiliates, giving them the opportunity to hear and discuss about the latest developments. The Select Working Parties (SWPs) of the policy committees are responsible for preparation of committee meetings and, at the instruction of the committees, development and formulation of concrete proposals for joint positions. In principle every member organization has the right to participate in the SWP, but in practice currently only 19 are involved (EMF website 2010), representing the most active affiliates. In the meantime, the SWPs have evolved into the most influential policy institutions in the EMF with their wide networks of contacts and regular meetings. All important recent EMF policy documents have first been drafted and discussed in the SWP, increasing their importance, and thus creating a two-tier model. The network evidence supports this, since normalized degree centralities of the affiliates represented in the SWPs are significantly higher than of those only in the Policy Committees, let alone of those not represented at all. Tables 3-5 show the division of countries represented in the Policy Committees and their SWPs, underlining these tendencies.

Table 3. Division of EMF policy committee membership (2009-10)

	Collective Bargaining	Company Policy	Industrial Policy
EU15 + EEA + CYP+ MAL+ SWI	37	34	37
EU7 (CEE)	7	7	8
non-EU	2	1	1
n	46	42	46

Table 4. Division of EMF Selected Working Party (SWP) membership (2009-10)

	Collective Bargaining	Company Policy	Industrial Policy
EU15 + EEA + CYP+ MAL + SWI	10	14	13
EU7 (CEE)	1	1	1
non-EU			
n	11	15	14

Table 5. EMF affiliates not members in any Policy Committee (2009-10)

EU15 + EEA + CYP + MAL + SWI	12 (+ 1)*
EU7 (CEE)	2 (+ 4)*
non-EU6 (CEE)	5 (+ 2)*
n	19 (+ 7)*

* = have become EMF affiliates after the survey was made

As can be seen from the Table 6, normalized degree centralities of the affiliates that are represented in the SWPs are significantly higher than those of the others. This has led to a two-tier system, where some trade unions are more involved in shaping the common agenda. Not having power over the agenda has consequences on whose interests are being represented. There have been complaints from the trade unions from CEE and most notable SEE that holding these meetings in Western Europe make it more difficult for them to participate, due to the travel costs. Also linguistic problems and lack of translation were cited often.

“The most important thing would be for the meetings to take place in countries where accommodation is cheap and travel expenses are cheaper. Currently most of the meetings are held in Brussels, making it very difficult for us to attend.” (Trade union officer from SEE)

“The basic problem underpinning the participation in the committee work in our case is the issue of financing, although there are assisted fund logistics available. Also the language barrier is a problem. In most meetings, where the translation is organized, it is only available in the major languages of the old EU.” (Trade union officer from CEE)

Table 6. Normalized Degree Centralities

Select Working Parties	23.23	EU15 + EEA + SWI + CYP + MAL	13.30
Policy Committees	15.42	EU7 (CEE)	12.14
Non-Policy Committees	5.56	Non-EU	9.80
ALL	14.65	ALL	12.76

Table 7. Top 19 (SWP) Based on Strength Index

1.	<i>GER1</i>	11.	<i>BEL2</i>
2.	<i>UK1</i>	12.	<i>BEL3</i>
3.	<i>DEN1</i>	13.	<i>SWE3</i>
4.	<i>SWE2</i>	14.	<i>NED1</i>
5.	<i>FIN1</i>	15.	<i>ITA3</i>
6.	<i>FRA5</i>	16.	<i>SPA2</i>
7.	<i>ITA1</i>	17.	<i>SPA1</i>
8.	<i>BEL1</i>		<i>FRA3</i>
9.	<i>CZE1</i>	19.	<i>POR1</i>
10.	<i>AUT1</i>		

Current SWP –members in *italics*

4.2 What is at Stake? Issues and Targets

Relations between trade unions from east and west are often portrayed as competition-driven. Significant differences in labour costs have been thought to make the cooperation impossible, since the relationship has been considered a zero-sum game (Bernaciak 2009; Erne 2008). Simply due to the fact that company-level is dominant in the CEE-countries, sectoral level cooperation has been little studied. Trade union networking has developed thus far through European trade union structures and specific sectoral trade unions (Gollbach & Schulten 2000). Organizations like the EMF are acting at the European level in promoting the European social model, influencing European legislation and conducting collective framework agreements with employer representatives. Therefore it is logical to look at the issues on which the EMF affiliates have agreed on. Table 8 shows that the trade unions from CEE-countries are not on their own in trying to influence certain issues. On issues like coordination of collective bargaining, EWC's and working conditions they have managed to form broad alliances with their western counterparts.

The most advanced approach towards a European coordination of collective bargaining in terms of content and institutional practices has been developed by the EMF (e.g. Schulten 2002), with the core of the strategy consisting of two elements: joint commitment to European guidelines for national collective bargaining which should prevent downward competition, and the political determination of EMF minimum standards which all the affiliates should feel obliged to bargain for. The first element was presented in an EMF resolution entitled "Collective bargaining with the Euro" which was adopted at an EMF Collective Bargaining Conference in December 1998 (Bispinck & Schulten 2001). Here the key point was for all trade unions to follow a wage policy that offsets the rate of inflation and to ensure that workers' incomes retain a balanced participation in productivity gains. The commitment to safeguard purchasing power and to reach a balanced participation in productivity gains is the new European coordination rule for coordinated collective bargaining in the metal sector all over Europe. There has been some criticism of how this is being done:

"In my opinion in different bodies we deal too much with consequences and too little with causes. In many cases we deal with issues how to implement a law but there is too little unity in incorporating our demands in law. So, for example, as long as we among ourselves have disagreements regarding minimum wage, we will have transfer of capital, discrimination in employment etc. It is only the unity of trade unions on the EU level that can oppose the capital." (Trade union officer from SEE)

Table 8. Blockmodelling: Issues and How to Tackle Them. CEE-countries in Red

	Through lobbying	Through voluntary coordination & benchmarking	Through formally binding decisions	Through demonstrations & strikes
European Growth and Employment Strategies	BEL4; CZE1 ; DEN1; DEN2; FIN2; FIN3; FIN4; FRA4; LUX1; NED2; NOR3; UK3	FIN1; POR1; SWI1	BEL2; CRO1 ; CYP1; FRA2; GRE1; HUN1 ; SLO1 ; UK2	FRA5
Coordination of collective bargaining		BEL2; BEL4; BUL1 ; BUL2 ; CRO1 ; CYP1; CZE1 ; DEN1; FIN1; FIN2; FIN3; FIN4; FIN5; FRA2; FRA5; GER1; HUN1 ; NOR1; ROM3 ; UK1; UK3	FRA6; ITA3; NED2; POR1; SLO1 ; SVK1 ; SWE2	
Controlling Foreign Direct Investments	FIN2	KOS1		
Supporting and supervising EWCs		BEL4; GER1; LUX1; UK1; UK3	BEL1; BEL2; DEN1; FIN3; FIN5; FRA6; ITA3; NED2; POL1 ; SLO1 ; SVK1 ; SWE2	FRA5
Sustainable development and environmental issues		CZE1 ; UK2	GRE1; NOR1; NOR3; SWI1	
Working conditions	BEL4; BUL2 ; DEN2; FRA4	BEL1; BUL1 ; CYP1; FIN1; FIN5; FRA2; FRA6; GRE1; HUN1 ; ITA3; KOS1 ; LUX1; SVK1 ; SWI1;	POL1 ; ROM3	
Corporate Social Responsibility		FIN4	POL1 ; UK2	
Training		BEL4; BUL1 ; DEN2; FRA4; GER1; NOR1; NOR3; SWE2	BUL2 ; KOS1 ; POR1; ROM3	
Controlling private equity			BEL1; CRO1	
Strengthening trade unions		UK1		

The inter-regional networks take different forms, based on the industrial relations systems in the region in question. Unions from Nordic countries (Denmark, Finland, Sweden) and Germanic countries (Germany, Austria, Benelux) prefer European level sectoral initiatives, influencing the forms of adopted cooperation. On the other hand, trade unions from Mediterranean Europe (France, Greece, Portugal, Spain etc) have advocated a different idea of coordination, based on realizing common qualitative goals. Unions from Britain and Central East Europe remain relatively detached from these processes, concentrating more on business unionism on company-level.

One of the most tangible ways of cooperation has been the establishment of cross-border collective bargaining networks starting in 1997, with the initiative coming from the German IG Metall (e.g. Gollbach & Schulten 2000). The most active one (Nord-Rhine Westphalia) embraces regular monitoring of settlements in the territories against the EMF bargaining coordination rule, exchanges of observers at meetings preparing claims, and occasionally also at negotiation sessions, lodging of claims aimed at establishing common standards and joint training activities. The other inter-regional networks are more embryonic in character and function mostly as information exchange initiatives, while another one, the Lower Saxony District and Amicus (UK) have focused on reciprocal visits, joint-seminars and development of bilateral information exchange. These networks have, however, omitted some countries, concentrating only on the Germany's neighbours. About half of the CEE countries are outside this structure, and since there is currently no EMF regional network either, these countries have formed their own networks. In a normal core-periphery analysis these networks would not show as cores, since they are located far away from the traditional power structures.

Table 9. IG Metall Initiated Inter-regional Networks

Bavaria District of IG Metall Austria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovakia, Slovenia
Coastal District of IG Metall Denmark, Sweden
Baden-Württemberg District of IG Metall Switzerland
North Rhine-Westphalia District of IG Metall Belgium, Luxembourg, The Netherlands,
Frankfurt District of IG Metall France

Source EMF website 2010.

These inter-regional networks function not only as a forum for exchanging information on collective bargaining, but also as a means to support and strengthen each other's activities and actions through solidarity.

"In our country we don't see the possibility to conclude collective bargaining agreements at sectoral level, so we concentrate on bargaining at the local level (at the workplace). We assist the negotiation process by providing experts, information and technical facilities."
(Trade union officer from CEE)

“Since signing the declaration to accede to the (EMF) we have committed ourselves to supporting the activities of the federation to support other trade unions, in other countries as well. This is a part of the duties established in the statutes. Of course, this does not always suit our purposes, as when production is transferred from another country to our country we should really be glad and not block such transfers. Sometimes you need philosophy and diplomacy in order to integrate your interests.” (Trade union officer from CEE)

4.3 The Case of Multiple Cores

A main assumption of the analytical framework is that the structural context in which the various actors operate partially shapes their interaction and is thus an essential element in the explanation of the outcome. An important facet of this context is the institutional landscape of the decision-making system in which the policy process evolves. This includes on the one hand a formal institutional environment resulting from the political will of the EMF. On the other hand interaction is shaped by informal routines and exchange processes criss-crossing constitutionally prescribed linkages. These networks are not only for the access to information, but also for the coordination and concentration of functionally interdependent units. These information infrastructures are often based on networks of policy-making committees.

An obvious approach is to define the periphery as the set of all vertices not in the core that are adjacent to at least one member of the core. Restricting the periphery in this way to “hangers-on” is appropriate if we think of the periphery as actors that are clearly associated with the core (and perhaps would like to move into the core). However, for other purposes we may prefer to include other nodes -- not directly connected to the core -- as part of the periphery as well. That is, we could conceive the periphery as simply all outsiders. These are two extremes of a continuum of possible definitions and it would make sense to have a general definition of periphery that could encompass all of these possibilities.

It is natural to think of the European metal sector as one with a single core, namely the affiliates at the EMF SWPs. The affiliates there are mostly from the big countries in the EU15. This view does not, however, take into consideration the work done in the regional-level. Earlier in this paper eight different regional groups within the metal sector in Europe were presented. These overlap partially with the IG Metall collective bargaining groups, but include more countries.

Whether a regional group can be considered a core, it needs to fulfill some conditions (Everett & Borgatti 1999). In general, in network literature a network has a core-periphery structure if the network can be partitioned into two sets: a core whose members are densely tied to each other, and a periphery whose members have more ties to core members than to each other (Borgatti & Everett 2000). Furthermore, Borgatti & Everett (Ibid.) do not seriously consider the possibility of multiple cores. Instead, their concern is with detecting whether the network as a whole forms a core-periphery structure. Logically, however, any cohesive sub-group can be regarded as the core of a highly localized region of the network. From this perspective, any node can be classified as a member of a local core, or as a member of the periphery of that core, or as unrelated to either one.

Based on the affiliates normalized degree centrality, Figure 1 shows how the European metal sector is divided into a core and peripheries. The threshold values chosen were $>14,29$ (Core/red) and $>5,71$ (Semi-periphery/green). The affiliates in yellow are considered peripheral here and have a degree centrality of $<4,29$. Apart from the “real” core including Germany, Spain, Belgium and the UK, also two other cores can be traced: the Nordic one, including seven trade unions and the Central East European one, including also seven trade unions. Since only the Austrian and Czech trade unions are represented in the SWPs, this core has remained somewhat hidden, although as Kohl & Platzer

(2004) have described, being part of the Vienna Memorandum has strengthened their position in Europe.

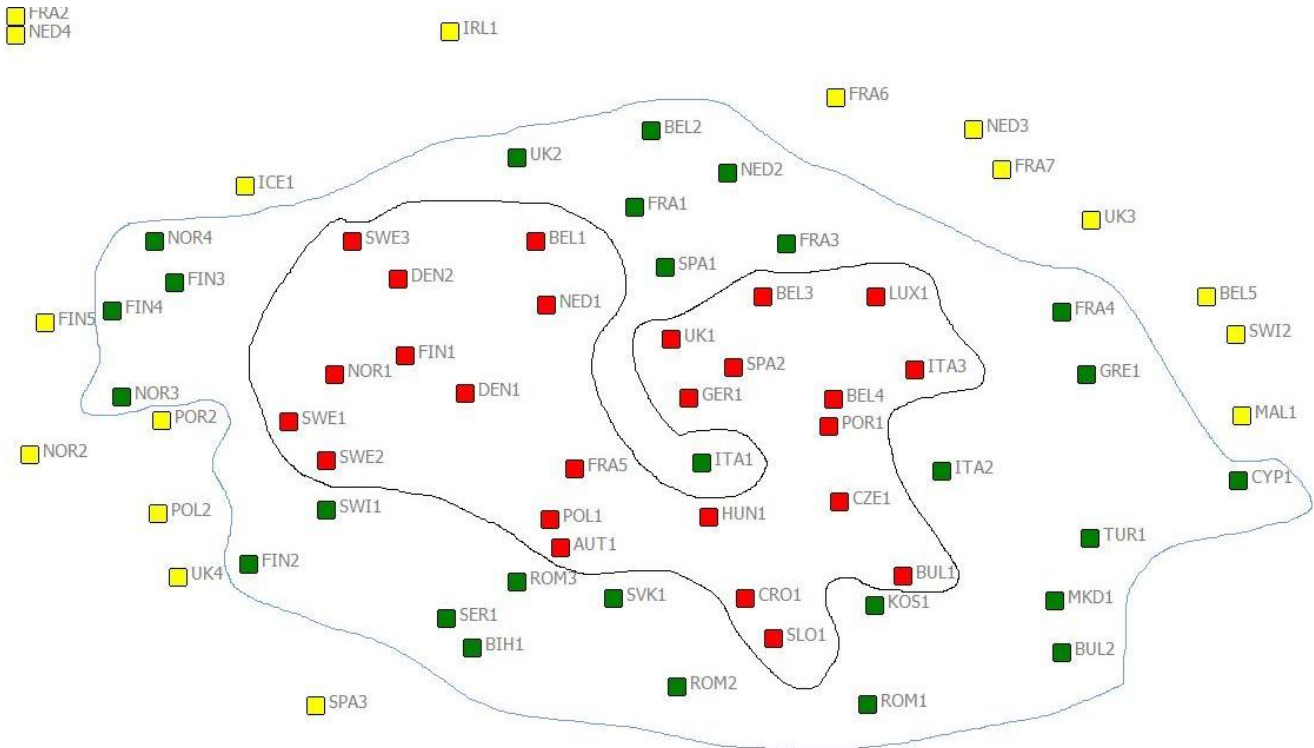


Figure 1. Core and Peripheries of European Metal Sector

Following the EU enlargements in 2005 and 2007, only the countries from South-Eastern Europe were left outside². The EMF had established already in 2003 a South-Eastern European Forum (SEEF) to contribute to EU enlargement in this region. The situation for trade unions in some countries of Western and Eastern Balkans is very difficult due to the fact that the employers' organizations are either weak or are not existing at all. At the same time there are some employers who do not respect basic labour rights and some governments have been using the implementation of the *acquis communautaire* as an excuse to withdraw fundamental and labour rights, and that some foreign companies are not implementing or improving good practice with regard to social dialogue and collective bargaining. On the other hand, there are some examples of responsible behaviour and even of good practice in some companies and employer organizations. The aim of SEEF is to help trade unions and strengthen their capacity to participate in social dialogue and European cooperation as well as creating possibilities for cross-border cooperation between unions in the Balkan region, although there have been some problems with this.

"It is very difficult to cooperate with regional group, as they are not providing with data which we agree. Besides this number of Trade Unions from different countries are member of EMF, and they are presenting only one activity. They are not showing interest for unite. Instead of one stronger, we do have a few, but without influence." (Trade union officer from SEE)

² Not counting countries like Norway and Switzerland that have voluntarily chosen to stay outside the EU.

5 CONCLUSIONS

By using network methods, this paper has tried to show how trade unions from countries in Central East Europe and South East Europe have been able to participate and affect the decision-making at European level. Also their cooperation structures with the trade unions coming from EU15 were studied. Network methods are an effective tool for studying cooperation, power and participation. They enable to analyze, how advantageous or disadvantageous structural position an actor has in a network. This relational positioning of affiliates helps explaining their influence and power positions, and their ability to realize their interests to a considerable extent.

In response to external social and economic changes, as well as membership problems, trade unions across Western Europe have gone through numerous mergers. The phenomenon of new, bigger trade unions, combining several industrial sectors has emerged in several countries (Ebbinghausen 2003), most notably in Sweden, the United Kingdom and Germany. At the same time, amalgamations of medium-sized unions or the absorption of smaller unions by larger ones has occurred in nearly every country. This phenomenon is not new, as evidenced by Visser & Waddington (1996), but it has taken a new form of conglomerate unions.

These mergers and takeovers have taken place mainly in the old EU15, where the position of the trade unions was stronger already. The situation is different in the new EU-countries from the CEE. The legitimization of independent trade unions there has depended largely on their support for democratic reforms and the peaceful transition to a market economy. The trade unions have made this their deliberate strategic choice, although they were aware that the immediate economic interests of trade union members could suffer. As noted by the European Commission in its report Industrial Relations in Europe 2004 (European Commission 2005), the trend towards mergers in the EU15 has been less pronounced in CEE member states. There are some examples of this, however, from countries like Croatia. The opposite holds true for Hungary, where the trade union movement has six national centres; the most in the EU apart from France. This goes back to the initial period of transition, where trade unions were sharply divided between the successor organizations to the former socialist unions and new, transformational unions. However, only one of these is representing metal workers at the international level, as the others do not belong to any sectoral European organizations.

By looking at the trade unions from Central East Europe and South East Europe, one can see that they have mostly very few members and have been formed only during the last ten years (EMF 2010). Although there has been consolidation between the trade unions, the main obstacle still seems to be the spreading of resources. In average metal trade unions in South-East Europe employ just over 3 officers, thus making international cooperation a lesser priority (EMF 2009). This comes through quite clearly from the following comment:

“Due to scarce financial possibilities we haven’t been able to hire new officers.”
(Trade union officer from SEE).

As an answer to this there have been attempts to increase coordination through strong joint actions, unified viewpoints and finally mergers, instead of fighting internally over the right to represent workers. Despite significant achievements over the past decade of transition to market democracies, trade unions throughout the region continue to face tough issues: restoring real incomes and employment levels in the aftermath of transition, getting their voices heard in social dialogue, and representing workers' interests in an environment of rapidly changing social policies and reforms. Also the reluctance of employers to organize themselves has made it difficult for the trade unions to establish themselves at the sectoral level.

In the almost 20 years of transition, trade unions from CEE and SEE have turned into major independent actors in helping to introduce the new institutional framework of industrial relations. They have also earned invaluable expertise and experience in a very short time in the international front, having been accepted into organizations like the EMF already in the early 1990's. Now, trade unions are at a turning point once again, facing a choice to either continue their defensive positioning in trying to guarantee jobs for their own workers on lower condition than are standard in the rest of Europe, or engaging more deeply with their Western counterparts in trying to find the best solution for the whole Europe and seen as equal partners instead of receivers of aid.

"Our point of view is that international solidarity issues are difficult and unsolved and there are many things to develop. For example, we are aware of a case where a company had plants in several countries and when they had to close one factory, employees in another country 'clapped their hands' when they heard of it. People are often very selfish for various reasons." (Trade union officer from EU15).

The best way to gain equal status is by introducing networks consisting of members from both EU15 and new member states in order to be able to cooperate on issues like wage dumping and underbidding competition. As prime example of this has been the Vienna Memorandum, founded in 1999.

This paper tried to apply network theories to measure trade union participation and cooperation at the European level. There remain, however, questions how to assess the results of cooperation. Particularly, against which benchmark should the value be measured and whether the elaboration of success and performance presented here is accurate. Drawing from evidence elsewhere (e.g. Bernaciak 2010), it can be stated that not every incidence of trade union cooperation should be regarded as significant neither for the parties themselves nor for Europe. This leads to the distinction of levels, where cooperation takes place. While trade union leaders present their stances during committee meetings and congresses, low-ranked trade union officials often participate in inter-plant exchanges, with union members giving their consent for cross-border action.

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