



European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions

Trade union strategies to recruit new groups of workers

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This report is available in electronic format only.

This report aims to provide an overview of developments in both trade union membership and density in the 27 EU Member States and Norway. It looks at the initiatives undertaken by trade unions to recruit new members, especially in areas other than the traditional core union ranks: the manufacturing and public sectors. Recruiting new members and extending the reach of union representation feature high on the agenda of trade unions, with resources being specially mobilised for this purpose. Key aspects of trade union activities remain crucial, notably the integration of organising in day-to-day activities, and also the focus on traditional collective identities and the role of union representation in improving wage levels and working conditions.

Introduction

Membership is a key resource for trade unions. Trade unions differ, according to their traditions, in how closely they link representation to their membership base. Even so, membership numbers remain a crucial component of a union's organisational strength and a fundamental element for legitimacy and recognition. Whether trade unions should engage in closely reflecting affiliates' expectations or more broadly representing class interests, the capacity to achieve their objectives greatly depends on the ability to mobilise worker support. Membership is the most evident form of trade union support, and it usually is a precondition for more demanding involvement in union activities, such as engaging in representation roles and taking up executive positions.

Certainly, the backing of trade union initiatives can extend far beyond membership; the most significant manifestation of such backing can be found in industrial conflict, notably strikes, which can involve and often do involve workers who are not union members. However, industrial conflict and strikes, although they may be considered an essential feature of industrial relations, need not to be exercised, as long as their potential is present. The usual measure of such conflict potential is membership and, when present, the amount of strike funds accumulated through membership dues. In fact, at least originally, membership indicates the level of control that trade unions have over the supply of labour and provides an idea of the unions' capacity to withdraw the labour force in case of disputes. Therefore, the number of members is an important resource in collective negotiations as well as a fundamental element of trade union bargaining power, since it can lend credibility to its 'threats'.

In addition to these strategic considerations, union membership validates claims to representation and constitutes the formal base for being recognised as the collective representative of labour interests. The institutionalisation of trade unions as stable representatives of labour must involve a clear identification of their constituency, not least because such a representation role has to be recognised by employers and, in some cases, certified by public bodies. Moreover, as with any association, trade unions greatly depend on member fees to finance their own activities; thus, their organisational effectiveness cannot be achieved without members' support.

Overall, membership is the basic source of people engaged in union activities, funds to finance such activities, formal recognition as representative organisations and strategic effectiveness. However, the affiliation of workers cannot be taken for granted, even if employees individually benefit from or appreciate the outcomes of trade union actions in terms of higher wages and improved job security, to name a couple of possible results. In fact, the benefits obtained by trade unions are usually granted to all people within a bargaining unit, regardless of whether they are trade union members and even regardless of whether they were in favour of the union's demands. In other words, trade unions can be affected by the 'free rider' problem, whereby self-interested persons would not be willing to bear the individual costs

of trade union representation, if they can take advantage of the results of such representation for free. Moreover, employer attitudes towards trade union representation can influence the perception of membership cost, such that union-avoidance practices may significantly reduce the propensity to join unions.

In order to overcome the free rider problem, special arrangements can be put in place, such as 'closed-shop' rules which stipulate union membership in workplaces covered by collective agreements. Alternatively, trade unions can strengthen the benefits that accrue to members only through the provision of reserved services. Given the social role accomplished by trade unions and their contribution to institutionalise conflict emerging from industrial relations, public authorities may also grant trade unions certain rights, including: the possibility to establish trade union structures in companies, the guarantee of time off to perform trade union representation, the establishment of workplace employee representation bodies, and the obligation for companies to engage in [information and consultation](#) procedures with trade unions in certain circumstances. All of these measures can facilitate trade union affiliation, since they ensure the presence of trade unions in workplaces and support the continuity of relations with workers, as well as strengthening their collective identity.

A particular institutional setting which has been recognised as supporting trade union membership quite effectively is the unions' involvement in the provision of unemployment benefits (Western, 1993; Blaschke, 2000; Scruggs, 2003). The so-called 'Ghent system' is in fact a characteristic of some of the European countries where trade union membership is highest, namely in Belgium, Denmark, Finland and Sweden. However, a number of recent reforms that have weakened the role of trade unions in the provision of unemployment benefits in some of these countries ([FI0510202F](#), [DK0209102F](#), [DK0609059I](#) – [see also](#) Böckerman and Uusitalo, 2006), and in Sweden where membership fees increased while benefits were reduced ([SE0702029I](#)), have been identified as contributing to the erosion of trade union representation.

In certain circumstances, the free rider problem seems to have been overcome and (temporarily) set aside by waves of widespread labour mobilisation and the establishment of new collective identities. In such cases, trade union membership is perceived as a benefit rather than a cost. Two important instances of such a development can be found in France and Italy in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Following the waves of mobilisation and conflict in the late 1960s, trade union membership expanded in both countries – a development that has proved to be more pronounced and resilient in Italy than in France. Nevertheless, it should be noted that not every type of mobilisation translates into membership gains. For instance, the [French contribution](#) to this study underlines that the more recent protest waves in France against different reforms and policies, including the pension reform in the early 1990s, did not lead to a renewal of trade unions' membership base. The nature of disputes may play an important role in this regard: workplace issues may provide more stable and sound backing to trade union organising than policy-related protests.

Furthermore, rules and criteria on representativeness are a key element in determining the organisational policies of trade unions. Minimum membership thresholds for the formal recognition of representation provide a powerful incentive to invest in organising initiatives, with a view to meet such requirements. Alternatively, if the requirement refers to election results of employee representation bodies, for example, trade union resources will be invested in supporting such election campaigns. In both of these cases, there may be incentives to reorganise the structure of representation, which may result in an increase of mergers among trade unions seeking to meet the representativeness targets. An example of

this trend can be found in the Italian public sector, where the right to sit at the bargaining table has been linked, since the late 1990s, to the average between density and votes obtained in the election of workplace representation bodies, with a minimum threshold of 5%. With such low entry thresholds, the impact of representativeness criteria on unions' organising strategies may be relatively small. In the Italian public sector, however, the regulation triggered a wave of mergers of smaller independent unions. Much more evident, for instance, is the investment in organising initiatives made by trade unions in the United Kingdom (UK) or, to a greater extent, in the United States (US), due to the need in the latter case to gain support by a majority of workers to be recognised as the single workplace bargaining party.

However, if trade union recognition is not associated with membership numbers – that is, when unions are considered representative according to established practices or through legal or administrative acts – the incentives to engage in organising workers may be greatly reduced. Such a situation arises when trade unions are integrated in tripartite or bipartite bodies following political decision, or when extension procedures of collective bargaining do not include an assessment of representativeness in terms of union membership. The most explicit example of such an administrative trade union recognition can be found in France, where a decree in 1966 introduced an assumption of irrefutable representativeness for five trade union confederations, based on historical and political dimensions. This situation remained unchanged until August 2008, when a reform introduced new rules for union representativeness to be implemented by 2012 ([FR08080391](#)). In Austria, the high collective bargaining coverage is ensured through compulsory employer representation; the institutional framework thus safeguards the effectiveness of trade union actions, regardless of their membership numbers. The integration of trade unions in social dialogue systems without any representativeness requirements reduces, at least to some extent, the urgency of strengthening union membership by investing resources in organising activities.

Trade union membership and density – that is, union membership as a proportion of the eligible workforce – are crucial indicators of industrial relations systems. In general, they are strictly linked to the viability and effectiveness of collective bargaining, social dialogue and participatory collective labour relations. As already outlined, a number of factors can influence membership levels and trends. In the past decades, a progressive erosion of trade union membership and density has occurred in many European countries, leading to extensive debates on trade union organisation and initiatives to reverse this trend (see, for instance, Milkman and Voss, 2004, Frege and Kelly, 2004, and, on the UK experience, Gospel and Wood, 2003

This report aims to provide an overview of current developments in both trade union membership and density, as well as of trade union activities in the European Union (EU) and Norway to recruit new members. A particular focus of this report will be on 'new' groups of workers, compared with those in the traditional core areas of trade unionism, namely the manufacturing and public sectors. For more details on specific countries, readers should refer to the individual [national reports](#).

Recent trends in union membership and density

In recent years, the difficulties faced by trade unions to maintain their representation base and capacity to regulate employment relations has sparked off fierce debates. These debates also included topics such as the possibility to improve trade union membership and density levels, as well as to achieve significant improvements in pay and working conditions. The decline in trade union density, often going along with a decrease in membership, have been identified as clear signs of a weakening of the role of trade unions and industrial relations in both today's society and economy. The emergence of forms of concession

bargaining as well as the decline in collective bargaining coverage are also indicators for a weakening of the trade unions in European countries.

A number of structural transformations in the economy have been identified as possible reasons for this potential representation and regulatory crisis of trade unions:

- sectoral shifts in European economies, with traditional union strongholds in manufacturing being severely affected by downsizing, while most of the employment creation takes place in much less organised industries, which are also more difficult to organise since workplaces are smaller and more dispersed;
- public sector reform, characterised by extensive outsourcing of labour, liberalisation and privatisation procedures. This has resulted in significant workforce reductions in the public sector, which generally recorded high trade union density levels;
- a renewed unilateralism in personnel issues pursued by company management, through the adoption of direct participation practices, incentive policies and career development measures which, in certain circumstances, may compete with union protections;
- a tendency towards the individualisation of employment relations, resulting from the abovementioned management policies and also from growing demands by a more educated and qualified workforce, for whom collective identities and interests seem to become less relevant;
- the globalisation of economic activities, which seems to weaken traditional industrial relations systems and exposes trade unions to [offshoring](#) threats and social regime competition.

These trends and challenges have spurred a wave of initiatives and analyses on trade union revitalisation. Although both the analyses on the weakening of the role of trade unions and possible responses in terms of unions' organising initiatives have basically originated in the US, where such issues have been at the centre of debate for a long time, more recently attention has been growing around these developments in the EU.

In the EU, the institutional support as well as the fact that industrial relations function as an instrument for regulating the economy are an established and common feature of national systems, albeit with important differences between the countries and country specificities. Therefore, before addressing the issue of organising campaigns launched by European trade unions, which is the main focus of this report, it is important to investigate trends in trade union membership and density in European countries. Such an analysis will help to assess the varying relevance of the strategies implemented in each national case.

Long-term trends

An important data source regarding the basic characteristics of industrial relations systems in advanced economies is the [Database on Institutional Characteristics of Trade Unions, Wage Setting, State Intervention and Social Pacts](#) (ICTWSS Database), set up and maintained at the [Amsterdam Institute for Advanced Labour Studies \(AIAS\)](#) of the [University of Amsterdam](#), under the responsibility of Professor Jelle Visser. The ICTWSS database collects information on 34 countries, including all EU Member States, covering a period of more than 40 years since 1960. Nonetheless, individual national time series may be

shorter or discontinuous, depending on data availability or historical reasons, such as the presence of non-democratic political regimes like Francoist Spain or the former Soviet Bloc countries.

For those countries for which the entire or continuous time series are available since 1960, it is interesting to briefly analyse the long-term trends in both trade union membership and density levels. Such an analysis will help to understand the tendencies that have characterised such different decades in terms of economic conditions and industrial relations: the industrial golden age of the 1960s, oil shocks and stagflation in the 1970s, widespread restructuring in the 1980s and the internationalisation of markets in the 1990s, as well the mobilisation and periods of conflict which have accompanied these developments in some of the European countries.

The complete time series for membership trends and trade union density covering the period 1960–2007 are available for 12 European countries – Austria, Belgium, Germany, Denmark, Finland, France, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden and the UK. Shorter but still continuous time series are also available for Spain covering the years 1978–2007 corporate policy and for Malta from 1983 until 2007 (see Figure A1 in the Annex for trends in trade union membership and density levels in 13 EU Member States and Norway). When looking at relative developments between 1960 and 2007, it is possible to identify some important differences across countries in terms of trade union density patterns.

- A minority of trade unions have managed to increase their density over the past decades: Finland (by 40 percentage points, from 32% in 1960 to 72% in 2006), Denmark (up 13 percentage points from 57% in 2006), Belgium (up 13 percentage points from 41% in 1960), Italy (up nine percentage points from 25% in 1960), Sweden (up three percentage points from 72% in 1960) and Malta (up 12 percentage points from 45% in 1983). Of these countries, only Belgium has confirmed this growing trend in recent years.
- A small number of countries – including Finland, Italy, Ireland and Spain – have recently recorded an increase in trade union membership along with a decline in union density. Such a development indicates possible problems in organising workers in labour market segments where job creation takes place, while maintaining the capacity to extend membership. In Ireland, in particular, this seems to be a long-term trend which is possibly characteristic of the employment boost since the early 1990s.
- Norway and the Netherlands show two mirroring trends. In Norway, trade unions have been able to considerably increase their membership while maintaining union density at a rather stable level; the number of trade union members has almost doubled between 1960 and 2007, while union density has declined by five percentage points to a still remarkable 55% in 2007. In the Netherlands, after a downturn that began in the 1970s, membership has recovered in the late 1990s and has remained relatively stable since then. However, this development appears not to have influenced unionisation in the country which remained at low density levels established since the mid-1980s: while the number of trade union members has increased by less than 20% over the period under examination, union density has almost halved from 40% to 21% in 2007.
- France and Italy both recorded a peak in trade union membership in the 1970s, probably resulting from the similar mobilisation periods in the late 1960s. In France, on the one hand, the membership peak was smaller and did not bring about a significant increase in trade union density; on the contrary, it was quickly replaced by a substantial decrease in both indicators: union density more

than halved from 20% in 1960 to 8% in 2007. At the time, it was already the lowest level reported among the 14 countries taken into consideration here. In Italy, on the other hand, trade union membership growth was significant, while union density steadily but moderately declined over the period under examination. The number of trade union members has almost doubled between 1960 and 2007, and union density increased by a third, from 25% in 1960 to 33% in 2007.

- In the UK, trade union membership and density followed a similar pattern, even in the 1960s and 1970s, with no apparent influence of the demise of multi-employer collective bargaining in the 1980s. However, the levels of both indicators started to noticeably decline in 1980, following a peak in 1979; this decline could only be halted regarding membership in the late 1990s, while union density has continued to decrease ever since, although at a slower pace. The two turning points in union membership and density trends interestingly coincide with significant changes in the national political scene.
- A steady declining trend can be found in the cases of Austria and Germany. In Austria, a constant decline in union density has been underway since the 1960s and more recently also in union membership. Over the reference period, trade union density more than halved from the second highest level of the 14 countries examined of 68% in 1960 to the average level of 32% in 2007. In Germany, the considerable injection of new members linked to the reunification in 1989 had a limited impact on union density, restoring levels of the early 1960s; after 1991, both trade union membership and density steadily declined, leading to a union density of 21% in 2007, down from 35% in 1960. Most of this decline is connected to the significant decrease in trade union membership and density in the federal states (*Länder*) of eastern Germany.

In fact, a significant decline in trade union density seems to be a common feature of eastern and central European countries over the period 1989–2006 (Table 1). While the level of union density in transition economies in the early 1990s was typically high and above the EU average, it rapidly decreased and now usually stands below this reference. Partial exceptions, with relatively higher affiliation rates, are Slovenia and Romania, while the most evident decline in union density occurred in the Baltic countries and Poland, considering that, when the transition started, union density was virtually 100% in the whole region – except for Slovenia.

Table 1: Trade union density in central and eastern European countries, 1989–2006 (%)

Country	First observation (year)	Last observation (year)	Difference (% points)	Difference
BG	70 (1992)	21 (2006)	-49	-70
CZ	80 (1993)	21 (2006)	-60	-74
EE	85 (1992)	13 (2006)	-71	-84
HU	73 (1990)	18 (2005)	-55	-76

LT	40 (1995)	14 (2006)	-26	-64
LV	30 (1995)	16 (2006)	-14	-46
PL	55 (1990)	14 (2006)	-40	-74
RO	46 (1998)	34 (2006)	-12	-27
SI	69 (1989)	41 (2003)	-28	-40
SK	75 (1993)	24 (2006)	-51	-68

Source: [ICTWSS Database](#)

The remaining four EU Member States – Cyprus, Greece, Luxembourg and Portugal – show quite different situations regarding trade union membership and density. Cyprus and Luxembourg maintain a relatively strong union representation system, despite some decline in density levels. In Greece, and particularly in Portugal, the situation is more complex. In Portugal, there has been a steady decline in trade union density since the second half of the 1970s; Portugal recorded a drop in trade union density similar to that of Spain in the wake of the democratic transition, but without the limited signs of recovery that can be traced in the Spanish case. In Greece, the late 1970s and 1980s marked a small increase in union density, which then started to slowly decline in the early 1990s.

Table 2: Trade union density in Cyprus, Greece, Luxembourg and Portugal, 1970–2006 (%)

Country	First observation (year)	Last observation (year)	Difference (% points)	Difference
CY	71 (1995)	62 (2006)	-9	-13
EL	36 (1977)	23 (2005)	-13	-36
LU	47 (1970)	40 (2006)	-7	-14
PT	61 (1978)	18 (2006)	-43	-70

Source: [ICTWSS Database](#)

Recent developments

When analysing the developments in trade union membership and density since 2000, a clearer picture emerges regarding the difficulties of representation. As illustrated in Figure 1 (below), in the majority of EU Member States and Norway the past decade has been marked by declining trade union density levels and also often decreasing membership numbers.

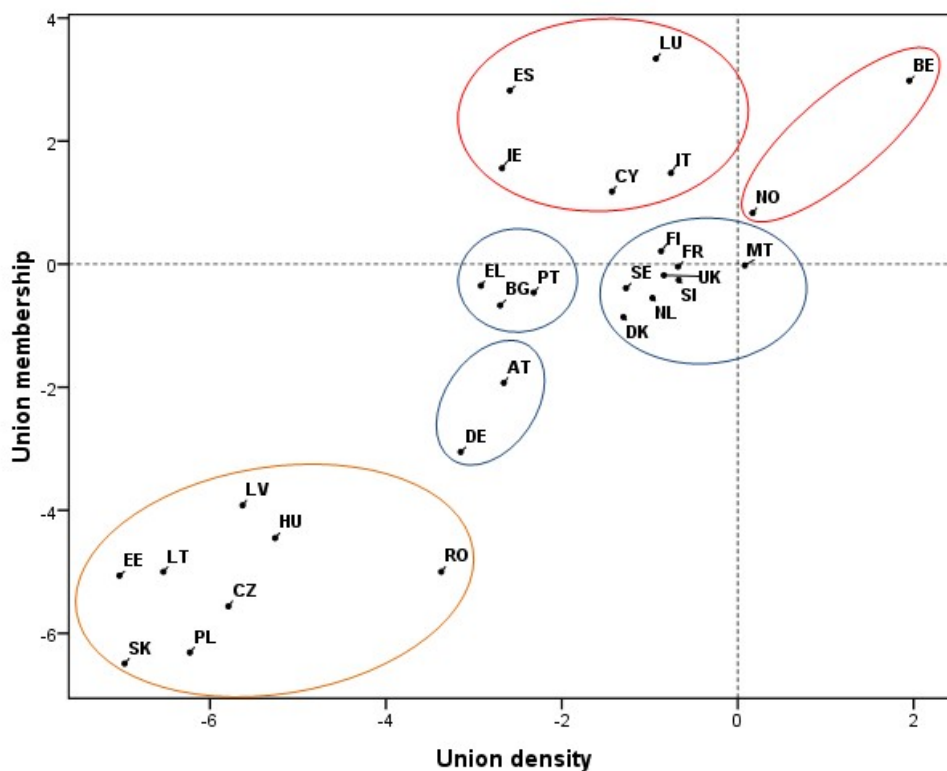
More specifically, it is possible to identify three main country clusters, including some subgroups of countries. The first cluster comprises a number of countries that show a positive trend in at least one of the two indicators – that is, trade union membership or density. For instance, in Belgium, trade unions

succeeded to significantly increase their membership levels as well as raising their density. The same development occurred, although to a smaller extent, in Norway. In five more countries – Cyprus, Italy, Ireland, Luxembourg and Spain – trade union membership increased, while union density declined.

The second cluster consists of countries where losses in both dimensions have been fairly limited and the emerging picture is more or less one of stability: this includes the Nordic countries (Denmark, Finland and Sweden, with relatively high union density levels), France (with the lowest European union density level), and Malta, Slovenia and the UK. However, this cluster also comprises two subgroups of countries where the pace of erosion of trade union representation has been more significant: in Bulgaria, Greece and Portugal, the decline essentially occurred in union density, while in Austria and Germany membership has also been affected.

The third cluster regroups the eight central and eastern European countries where trade union membership and density have both decreased remarkably in recent years.

*Figure 1: Trends in trade union membership and density, by country and country cluster (average annual % change)**



Notes: * Data for Cyprus, Latvia, Luxembourg, Poland and Romania cover the period 1998–2006, Greece and Hungary 1998–2005, Portugal 1997–2006 and Slovenia 1998–2003.

Source: [ICTWSS Database](#)

Table 3 includes information on employment growth and the most recent level of trade union density in all of the countries under examination, grouped into the three clusters. The rate of job creation may

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partly explain the decline in trade union density in countries where union membership continues to grow or remains rather stable. Such a decline in union density could underline possible problems in organising workers in the economic sectors where employment is increasing. However, the decline in union density is so widespread and significant that, regardless of the employment trend over the reference period, this correlation can be considered as weak, at most. Union density levels can complement the analysis of recent trends illustrated in Figure 1 above, thus providing a more comprehensive assessment of the situation of union representation in each country (Table 3, Index B).

Table 3: Trade union density, membership and dependent employment, 2000–2006*

Country	Density (%)	Union membership (average annual % change)	Union density (average annual % change)	Employment (average annual % change)	Index A** Trend	Index B** Situation
Cluster 1						
BE	54	2.98	1.95	0.94	4.93	2.82
CY	62	1.18	-1.43	2.93	-0.25	2.20
ES	15	2.82	-2.59	6.22	0.22	-0.15
IE	35	1.56	-2.68	4.91	-1.12	0.65
IT	33	1.48	-0.76	2.33	0.72	0.92
LU	40	3.34	-0.93	4.61	2.41	1.61
NO	55	0.83	0.17	0.66	1.00	2.08
Cluster 2						
AT	32	-1.93	-2.66	0.83	-4.59	-0.23
BG	21	-0.67	-2.70	2.35	-3.37	-0.52
DE	21	-3.05	-3.15	0.12	-6.20	-1.11
DK	69	-0.86	-1.30	0.46	-2.16	2.19
EL	23	-0.35	-2.92	3.23	-3.27	-0.41
FI	72	0.21	-0.87	1.13	-0.66	2.61
FR	8	-0.04	-0.68	0.66	-0.72	-0.67
MT	57	-0.02	0.08	-0.10	0.06	2.00

NL	22	-0.55	-0.97	0.44	-1.53	-0.14
PT	18	-0.46	-2.32	2.35	-2.78	-0.56
SE	75	-0.39	-1.27	0.95	-1.66	2.58
SI	41	-0.26	-0.67	0.42	-0.94	1.00
UK	29	-0.18	-0.84	0.69	-1.01	0.35
Cluster 3						
CZ	21	-5.56	-5.79	0.33	-11.34	-2.12
EE	13	-5.06	-7.03	2.46	-12.09	-2.67
HU	18	-4.45	-5.26	1.28	-9.71	-1.96
LT	14	-5.00	-6.53	2.28	-11.53	-2.49
LV	16	-3.92	-5.63	3.10	-9.54	-2.01
PL	14	-6.31	-6.23	-0.16	-12.54	-2.70
RO	34	-5.00	-3.37	-2.24	-8.37	-0.88
SK	24	-6.49	-6.97	0.74	-13.45	-2.40

Notes: * Data for Cyprus, Latvia, Luxembourg, Poland and Romania covers the period 1998–2006, Greece and Hungary 1998–2005, Portugal 1997–2006 and Slovenia 1998–2003.

** Index A = the sum of the average annual percentage change in trade union membership and density. Index B = the sum of the normalised Index A and normalised trade union density.

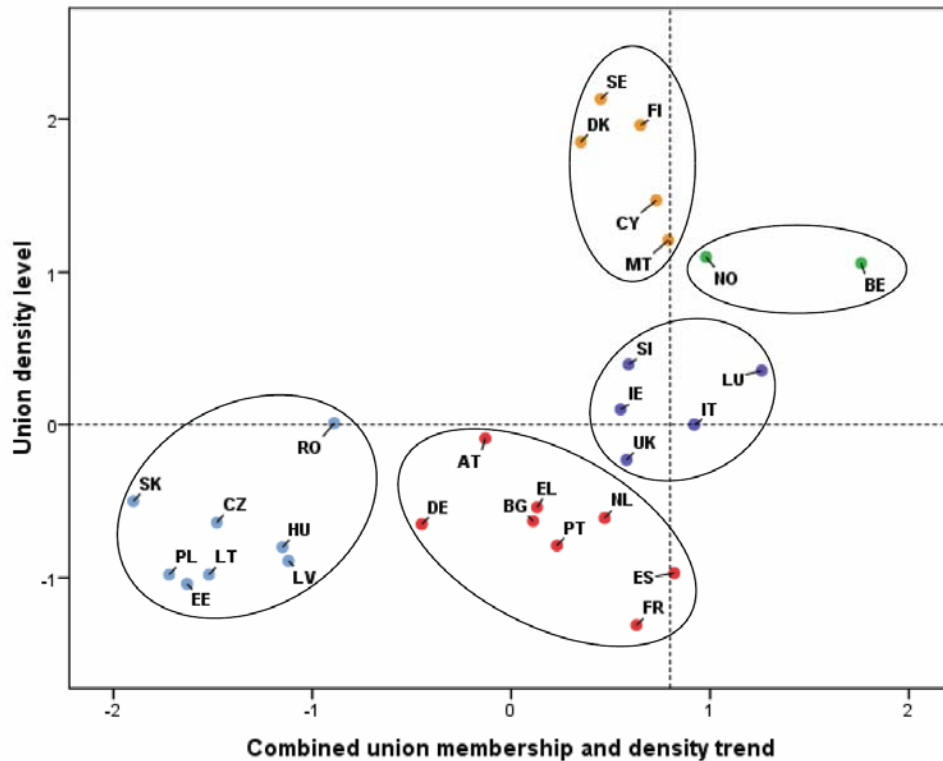
Source: [ICTWSS Database](#)

The two last columns in Table 3 present two combined indexes of the recent trend (the sum of the annual rates of membership and density change) and of the situation of union representation (the sum of the normalised union density and the normalised trend index). Calculating the recent trend and normalised situation of union representation for each country provides a rough picture of the overall situation of trade union representation. Understandably, a small erosion of union membership and density may be of limited significance if union density levels are above 70% in a country. On the other hand, if union density levels are below 20%, an increase in membership numbers combined with a decline in union density cannot be regarded as granting good prospects for the consolidation of trade union representation. Nonetheless, considerable losses in both indicators certainly represent a difficult context for trade union action.

Figure 2 (below) shows where the various national trade union representation systems are positioned in terms of trade union density in the most recent year available (2005 or 2006) and their combined trend

index of union membership and density in the 2000s (Index A). Since both indicators have been 'normalised', positive values indicate above average trade union representation; this corresponds to a union density level above the simple average of 32.5% and recent developments above the overall negative average trend. The vertical dotted line, however, marks where the combined index of membership and density trend is close to zero – a position of relative stability in representation – so that countries to the right of the line are characterised by an increase in overall trade union representation capacity. The picture therefore helps to appreciate the strength (or weakness) of national union representation systems in terms of both union density (from top to bottom) and recent developments (from right to left). The closer to the upper right corner, the stronger appears the national union representation system.

Figure 2: Situation of national trade union representation systems (trade union density level, and combined union membership and density trend*)



Notes: * Data for trade union density level from 2006, except for Hungary (2005), Greece (2005) and Slovenia (2003).

Combined trade union membership and density trend corresponds to the sum of the average annual percentage change in membership and density (see Index A in Table 3 above). Both variables have been normalised (that is, transformed to have mean=0 and standard deviation=1) to allow a better representation. Since the original trend variable has a negative mean (-3.91).

The vertical dotted line has been positioned at the positive value which corresponds to a relative stability in trade union membership and density (no changes or offsetting variations).

Source: [ICTWSS Database](#) (author's calculations)

Specific groups

When looking at the membership composition of trade unions, a significant segmentation emerges in terms of sectors of activity and groups of workers. In general, the lower the national union density level, the higher the scope for the fragmentation of union representation and concentration of members in a few economic sectors and occupational groups. However, some situations cut across the various countries and seem to represent some common characteristics of the present structure of trade union representation in Europe.

In particular, the following four factors tend to influence the level of trade union density:

- sector of activity – the public sector, including utilities such as public transport, electricity, gas and water supply, and traditional manufacturing activities still represent the core of unionised sectors. Union density is far lower in the private services sector;
- age – young workers seem to be almost invariably the most problematic group of workers to unionise;
- company size – small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) show systematically lower levels of unionisation;
- employment contracts – workers on temporary contracts and those on other atypical work relationships are reportedly difficult to unionise.

It is not always easy to disentangle the effects of each individual factor, as conditions unfavourable to unionisation tend to cluster. For instance, young workers are often employed under non-standard employment contracts and often in private services. Moreover, these conditions are frequently combined with other variables, such as gender and nationality; for instance, women and migrant workers are sometimes associated with lower than average unionisation rates, mostly because they are concentrated in certain economic sectors and are often employed under atypical contracts.

Women, in particular, often show unionisation levels which are similar to those of men. In a number of countries, the unionisation rate is higher for women than for men. However, high unionisation rates among women are more the effect of the sector than of gender, with especially high female employment rates in the public sector, for example. The second annual ETUC report on the gender representation gap in trade unions and gender mainstreaming activities, which summarises the [8 March Survey results](#), confirms this tendency. The survey findings reveal that women are increasing their share in European trade union membership, often even in countries where total membership is declining. On the one hand, these findings reflect the increasing feminisation of the labour market and, on the other hand, they seem to suggest that organising initiatives are, to a certain extent, successful in the services sectors where women account for a large proportion of the workforce.

In many countries, the segmentation of trade union membership is perceived as a fundamental weakness. Sometimes, the trade union membership segmentation is considered being an even greater weakness than the erosion of union density levels, since it challenges the general representation of trade unions. With regard to the shrinking participation of young people in trade unions, the segmentation of union membership also seems to jeopardise the prospects of a generational renewal. In this regard, the divide between the private and the public sectors is becoming particularly important in many countries, including Portugal, Spain and the UK, as well as eastern and central European countries. In the latter countries, the membership gap is particularly wide between the private and public sectors, as trade unions are less present in private sector manufacturing. In Hungary, for instance, trade union members are concentrated in public administration and utilities, while in Poland the private sector is virtually union-free.

In some countries, however, the segmentation of union membership is not evident, as is the case in Belgium where no significant differences exist across sectors and generations. In Belgium, the unionisation rate of young workers is in line with the national average of unionisation; this situation may be linked to the Ghent system, as many young people become trade union members when they enter the labour market as unemployed. In fact, the labour market seems to be a crucial factor regarding union membership in Belgium, as two other uncommon characteristics emerge: unionisation is higher in the private than in the public sector (where job security is higher and therefore unemployment benefits do not play a crucial role) and company size does not affect the affiliation rates. Moreover, workers under non-standard contracts show greater awareness of the role of trade unions. In Finland, sectoral and generational differences in union membership are not high either, although more significant than in Belgium. Trade union membership remains lower in the private sector than in the public sector (67% compared with 86% in 2008), as well as for lower-educated workers and for workers with a foreign background. However, unionisation rates in Finland never reach levels below 63%, with the exception of young workers aged 15–24 years whose union density is 24%.

National debates on union membership

The national debates on union membership tend to reflect the local situation of trade union representation (see Figure 2 above), but they are also influenced by the national institutions and specific features which characterise the industrial relations systems and social dialogue. As outlined in the introductory section, institutional recognition may downplay in some cases the crucial role of union membership and density levels in sustaining collective labour representation. Trade union organisations with lower union density may counterbalance this with an established integration in social dialogue structures, as it was reported for some central and eastern European countries. Moreover, the existence of a legal system of employee representation and effective mechanisms for the extension of collective bargaining coverage may reduce the relevance of union membership as a means to ensure worker protection. This was the case in France until the recent reform introducing new rules of trade union representativeness, which will fully take effect by 2012. Similarly in Spain, the election results of employee representation bodies are considered more indicative of the strength of trade union representativeness than membership data.

As could be expected, in Belgium and Norway, the stability and substantial strength of trade union representation has drawn the attention of the trade unions to issues such as the changing patterns of

representation or the differences in unionisation across different groups of workers. In both countries, trends in union membership levels are regarded as confirming the role of trade unions. In Norway, for instance, the focus turned to the growing importance of union representation outside affiliates of the Norwegian Confederation of Trade Unions ([Landsorganisasjonen i Norge, LO](#)). In the 1970s, trade unions that were not a member of LO organised about 25% of members. Nowadays, this level has risen to almost half of all union members, following the growth of white-collar and professional trade unions, especially for highly-educated workers. This situation regarding union membership is probably a structural effect of the long-term capacity of trade unions to organise workers in new areas of the labour market, where most of the employment creation has taken place in recent years. As a consequence of this new balance within the trade union movement, the systems of income policy and tripartite bodies have progressively included such organisations. Meanwhile, within LO, there has been a growing debate over the integration of migrant workers among trade union members and officers, since the level of migrant employment has been increasing in key sectors and occupations organised by LO. Moreover, students have been increasingly considered as a target of organising initiatives. In Belgium, trade unions continue their tradition of focusing on specific groups of workers with a view to strengthen their membership base. Trade unions in Belgium already included migrant workers in their organising campaigns in the 1960s and shortly afterwards they also targeted women, while they have integrated young people in such group-based organising initiatives since the 1980s.

Interestingly, the debate over trade union membership is most lively in countries where density levels are the highest, such as in the Nordic countries. It seems that the recent erosion of union membership and density is considered as a potential threat to the national models of industrial relations in these countries. Therefore, the extensive institutional support of industrial relations is far from being regarded as isolating social partner organisations from membership developments and seems to be considered as firmly rooted in worker representation and highly dependent on it for its legitimacy. In three of the four Nordic countries – Denmark, Finland and Sweden – the recent decline in union density has been linked, particularly by the trade unions, to changes in the union-administered unemployment benefit system, the so-called Ghent system. Public as well as internal discussions have encouraged the trade unions to identify specific targets for organising initiatives, with a view to reverse the negative trends.

In Sweden, for instance, albeit a continuing high union density, the decline that has emerged since the 1990s was at the centre of an important debate which has gone beyond the social partner organisations and included the wider public, in particular after the decrease in union density accelerated in the past two years. The trade unions have explained the fall in density, mainly by referring to the increase in the fees that have to be paid to be a member of an unemployment fund ([SE0806029I](#)). The Confederation of Swedish Enterprise ([Svenskt Näringsliv](#)), on the other hand, questioned this link and underlined that workers can be members of trade unions without joining an unemployment fund. In perspective, the decline in union density was identified in the public debate as possibly challenging the representativeness of trade unions and, consequently, the effectiveness and coverage of collective bargaining. This has encouraged trade unions to engage in organising initiatives. The attention of trade unions has focused on young workers, atypical jobs and large cities, where union membership tends to be lower. This is probably due to the large private services sector, which is less unionised than other sectors of the economy.

In Finland, the decrease in union density has been associated with the launch of an independent unemployment fund in 1992. Trade unions' organising efforts, and particularly those targeted at young workers in highly-skilled and highly-educated positions, have resulted in stable and even increasing

membership numbers. The situation is now perceived as improving, with also some signs of growing union density. Besides young people, the most challenging groups of workers for unionisation are migrants and people employed on temporary contracts, as well as workers in high-skilled sectors, such as information and communication technologies (ICT), and upper clerical employees in small enterprises.

Denmark has recorded a decrease in membership numbers of trade unions affiliated to the Danish Confederation of Trade Unions ([Landsorganisationen i Danmark, LO](#)) and some increase in other professional trade unions, within an overall reduction of both total union membership and density. These trends have been associated with the high trade union fees and the emerging attitudes of young workers, who no longer consider joining unions as a corollary of entering the labour market, as it had been the case for a long time in Denmark. Therefore, the public debate, which mainly involves researchers and trade unionists, has focused on the free rider problem and the necessity to engage in proactive initiatives to inform especially young people about the role of trade unions while also trying to attract them. Moreover, migrant workers were identified as an important target for organising, notably in the construction sector, where their unionisation rate is far lower than that of Danish workers. In fact, workers from central and eastern European countries show a unionisation rate of 4% compared with 85% for the entire sector. Membership of workers on temporary or part-time employment contracts, on the contrary, is not a central topic in the national debate, since a key objective of trade unions remains to promote stable and full-time employment. Interestingly, a study published in early 2009 has underlined that membership in trade union unemployment funds has been decreasing even during the recent economic downturn. In light of the planned cut in tax deductions for unemployment fund fees (from 33% to 25%), observers have expressed concerns for a possible further decrease in trade union membership which may challenge the key role of trade unions in the Danish flexicurity model.

In the other groups of countries where union density is relatively high and the situation rather stable, trade union membership does not represent a topical issue in the national debate, not even within the trade unions. Cyprus has recorded a steady increase in trade union membership over the past decade, along with a progressive decline in union density. The latter is basically due to a sectoral shift which has involved employment reductions in traditional union strongholds and growth in far less unionised industries. However, this trend has not resulted in a significant debate on union membership in Cyprus, even if there is a widespread consensus on the difficulties to organise workers in both certain sectors of activity and specific groups of workers. So far, migrant workers have attracted most of trade unions' attention, as unions are concerned about the working conditions of migrants and the possibility that migrants may constitute a second-tier, lower-protected labour market. The low interest of young workers in trade unions as well as the low involvement of women in union activities have also been cited by trade unions as a source of concern and areas where trade union initiatives should be reinforced.

In Luxembourg, there is no specific debate on trade union membership, although trade union representativeness was at the centre of an important discussion when a new law on union representation was passed in 2004. In Malta, there have been some public demands in recent years for an independent audit of membership figures released by the trade unions. Maltese trade unions are focusing their attention on certain sectors of activity, including construction, tourism and retail, where they believe that union avoidance practices are widespread. Moreover, the growth of the informal economy is considered as contributing to increased difficulties in unionisation. In Slovenia, the current discussions on union membership focus on young workers, who show a low interest in joining trade unions, migrant workers and workers employed under atypical contracts. In particular, the precarious occupational situation of

fixed-term and temporary agency workers is viewed as a major impediment to joining unions. In Italy, the substantial stability and even the slight increase in union membership among employees in recent years (and the remarkable affiliation rate of retired workers who account for roughly half of all trade union members) have contributed to the image of relative strength of the Italian trade union representation system in the international context. The national debate has mainly focused on atypical forms of employment and the capacity of trade unions to represent workers with non-standard employment contracts. Moreover, special attention has been devoted to the integration of migrant workers in trade unions.

An important exception to this lack of focused debates on trade union membership is Ireland, where there is an ongoing discussion of the prospects of trade union representation. In fact, even if trade unions prefer to highlight rather the increase in membership than the decline in union density, there is a clear awareness of the problems facing trade unions. In April 2008, a major national conference was held to address the issue of trade unions' future, entitled 'Trade unions in the 21st century: Retreat or renewal'. A major concern for trade unions is the shrinking membership and union density levels in the private sector, where the employment decline in traditional manufacturing and low-skilled occupations is hardly counterbalanced by an increase in the services sector. In the early 2000s, the major private sector union, the [Services, Industrial, Professional and Technical Union \(SIPTU\)](#), set up a special organising unit. According to SIPTU's President, Jack O'Connor, trade unions should concentrate their resources on organising non-union workplaces and target in particular employers who undertake union-avoidance practices, as well as reducing their pressure on organised companies. Other relevant areas of the membership debate in Ireland are migrant workers, temporary agency workers, freelancers and self-employed workers. A highly controversial discussion has centred on the integration of migrant workers in the labour market and possible negative effects such as a downward pressure on union pay rates, and on terms and conditions of employment. This has resulted in specific efforts by the trade unions to improve the terms of employment of temporary agency workers and vulnerable workers in general to prevent possible tensions between Irish workers and migrant workers. As concerns freelancers and self-employed people, the trade unions secured an important government commitment in the latest social partnership agreement to amend competition law in order to allow collective representation and bargaining of certain groups of self-employed workers, such as voice-over actors, freelance journalists and session musicians.

Similarly, in the UK, there has been a renewed attention to organising. After the election of the New Labour government in 1997, trade unions initiated new campaigns to organise members. These initiatives were linked to the expectations of a more favourable political and social context. In 1998, the [Trades Union Congress \(TUC\)](#) launched the 'Organising Academy' which aimed to promote the recruitment of new groups of union members, especially women, young people, services workers, and black and ethnic minority workers. These initiatives only showed limited results and no substantial changes occurred in the declining trends in union density, even if the pace of decline was slowed down and union membership has remained stable. The issue of organising workers has remained high on the trade union agenda. A new phase of efforts in this regard has started in 2008 and is targeted at trade union officers, under the auspices of an 'Activist Academy'.

In the Netherlands, the discussion has focused particularly on young workers and temporary forms of employment, as well as on the role of increasing part-time work. Trade unions also looked at the changing sectoral structure of the economy, characterised by employment growth in sectors that seem difficult to organise.

In other countries with lower than average union density and negative trends, national debates on trade union membership have been rather limited, due to the presence of supportive institutions. In Austria, the institutional integration of trade union representation has somehow separated the capacity of trade unions to exert their regulatory role from their membership levels and density. However, in recent years, the trade unions have invested in resources to retain and attract members. This has led to reconsider the traditional union identity which, for a long time, has centred around Austrian nationals and standard employment, with some openings to migrant workers and atypical employment contracts.

In France, trade unions' legitimacy mainly derives from the election results of employee representatives and works councils (*comités d'entreprise*, CE) ([FR0706029I](#)) and the capacity to mobilise support for collective disputes in the form of strikes and demonstrations. Moreover, the new law on trade union representativeness has confirmed the importance of employee representative election results rather than trade union membership. However, in recent years, a debate over the future of trade unions has emerged, due to the fact that trade union membership at present does not extend much beyond the boundaries of activists – about half of all union members are or used to be trade union officers.

In Spain, the institutional framework which gives trade unions the opportunity to extensively influence and shape industrial relations without any link to membership is regarded as reducing the incentive to join unions and favour free-riding behaviour. Trade unions' influence is mainly channelled through the election results of employee representatives and generally applicable collective agreements which cover all workers, regardless of whether they are union members. These aspects are considered to be the main reason for low union membership and density. This, in turn, is also reinforced by high unemployment, a high rate of atypical forms of employment and the labour market segmentation which affects in particular women, young people and migrant workers, who all show low unionisation rates. Special initiatives were launched targeting young people, with the goal of renewing the trade unions' organisational structure. The trade unions also campaigned with success against the Law on foreign people, claiming that illegal migrant workers should be granted full trade union rights ([ES0802019I](#)). In addition, the trade unions also tried to improve the employment conditions and purchasing power of workers in non-standard forms of employment ([ES0707049I](#)).

Two other countries where a debate over trade union membership has developed in recent years are Germany and Portugal, both of which have been affected by decreasing union density. In Germany, trade unions debate on how to reverse the decline in union membership and density, which has accelerated in the past decade. In general, the services sector as well as white-collar employees and young workers are the unions' main priorities for organising initiatives. Further priorities include establishing trade union representation in new workplaces and extending it to white-collar employees in professional or managerial positions, on the one hand, and to marginal part-time workers and temporary agency workers, on the other. German trade unions also seek to strengthen the bargaining power at workplace level, which is an essential component of the unions' strategy to reverse the downward trend in membership and density. Regarding their efforts, trade unions believe that establishing and maintaining personal contacts with workers is crucial.

In Portugal, the decline in union membership has been linked to the fragmentation of trade union representation and ideological cleavages. The debate over union membership was to a great extent an internal one. In the late 1980s, the main trade union organisation, the General Portuguese Workers' Confederation ([Confederação Geral dos Trabalhadores Portugueses](#), [CGTP](#)), started an important initiative to stop the loss in members and the decline in density; CGTP's initiative focused on an internal

reorganisation, involving an administrative and financial consolidation as well as mergers, and the strengthening of its presence in workplaces. More recently, the confederation's efforts have focused on young workers and women, as well as on the labour market sections where employment growth mostly takes place, notably in the services sector and SMEs. The General Workers' Union ([União Geral de Trabalhadores, UGT](#)) launched an internal reorganisation strategy in the mid-1990s; this was lately followed by targeted initiatives to increase union membership, focusing on youth employment, women, technical staff, migrants and self-employed workers.

In some countries, however, the debate is almost inexistent, such as in Greece, Latvia, Romania and Slovakia. Among the central and eastern European countries, the issue of union membership has been discussed to a greater extent in Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland. In Bulgaria, the debate is confined to the trade unions, in particular to the main trade union organisations such as the Confederation of Independent Trade Unions in Bulgaria ([Конфедерация на независимите синдикати в България, CITUB](#)) and the Confederation of Labour Podkrepa ([Страница на КТ Подкрепа, CL Podkrepa](#)). Both organisations underline the importance of extending union membership to new economic sectors, SMEs, minority workers and young people. CITUB in particular has devoted considerable effort to the discussion of membership trends. For instance, two of its national conferences have focused on the issues of membership and organising initiatives. The main issues discussed were the imbalances between the structure of trade union representation and the structure of employment, the need for internal reorganisation to make best use of the scarce human and financial resources available to support union activities, and organising initiatives.

In the Czech Republic, the recent discussion of new representativeness rules also comprised the issue of trade union membership and density. No specific debate has taken place in Estonia. However, the government has allocated a fund to strengthen the administrative capacity of both trade unions and employer organisations, especially through training activities, as they are part of the national economic and social policy forums. In Lithuania, the government has allocated a specific budget to strengthen social dialogue and raise awareness of labour issues in strict cooperation with the trade unions. To do so, training and meetings are organised at company level dealing with issues such as labour relations, and [health and safety, or with political representatives](#) on social problems and collective rights. In addition, special publications on collective labour relations and broad information and awareness raising campaigns on television and other media are realised.

In Hungary, the public debate occasionally highlights the low unionisation rate, which tends to negatively affect the legitimacy of trade unions. At the same time, even if the trade unions are well aware of the problems related to a weak constituency, the full integration of national and sectoral trade unions in established, state-supported tripartite and bipartite social dialogue bodies downplays to a great extent the importance of low union membership and density levels. In general, company-based unionism represents a structural limit to the extension of trade union membership. Sectoral trade unions are only loose associations of workplace unions, which are understaffed and have little resources to engage in organising. This means that union membership typically increases through the establishment of new company trade unions, which usually results from 'bottom-up' processes – that is, when employees are dissatisfied with their working and employment conditions and have failed to improve their situation through direct informal bargaining with the employer. In these cases, trade unions outside the company can provide some support and legal assistance; however, they are rarely in a position to invest significant resources. Only a minority of trade unions have actively engaged in establishing new unions in their

sectors, including the Trade Union of Employees in Commerce ([Kereskedelmi Alkalmazottak Szakszervezete, KASZ](#)) and the Metalworkers' Union ([Vasas Szakszervezeti Szövetség, Vasasszakszervezet](#)). Migrant workers, who are often not registered, and atypical forms of employment are sections of the labour market which are almost impossible to organise for unions. Moreover, employees fear possible retaliation by employers and do not show great interest in joining trade unions. This is especially true for white-collar workers in the manufacturing industries. With regard to young workers, even in companies where trade unions are present they are not easy to unionise; nonetheless, they represent, together with women, the main source of new members for newly established unions in greenfield sites.

In Poland, the debate on declining union membership has developed within trade unions since the mid 1990s. As a result, trade unions have launched a number of initiatives to organise the private sector and strengthen their existing presence. Young people have been a main target of organising initiatives both with a view to reverse the 'ageing' of union membership and establish a base for future developments. Young people are mostly employed in the private sector where employment has significantly increased in the post-1989 period, such as in retail chains, and banking and financial services. Another area of the labour market which has captured the attention of Polish trade unions is self-employment, especially in the road haulage and construction sectors.

Union initiatives to expand membership base

Organising is an ordinary activity for any trade union and it is not always easy to separate it from other dimensions of union action. Collective bargaining and day-to-day contacts with members and workplaces are certainly part of a continuous process of supporting existing and promoting new membership. However, trade unions may launch specific initiatives with aim of extending the reach of their presence beyond the established boundaries of representation. Or, given the membership erosion in many European countries, trade unions may seek to reverse these trends and raise their representativeness in specific sections of the economy and labour market. Public or internal debates can help identify the areas where intervention is needed, thereby shaping the organising strategies of trade unions. This section covers, to a certain extent, the trade union actions resulting from the debates that were discussed in the previous section.

Since it was impossible to carry out an extensive and comprehensive survey of trade union initiatives aiming to increase union membership, different types of strategies and approaches to organising have been identified (Table 4 below). Several examples of these strategies and approaches will be outlined below. In general, all types of initiatives can be simultaneously present in each of the countries covered by this study. Therefore, the country examples provided in this section only reflect, to a certain extent, the relative importance of the approach chosen in national debates and practices, as they were interpreted by the EIRO national correspondent in the national report. Moreover, the selection of trade union initiatives reported in each EU Member State and Norway should not be considered as representative of the whole set of organising activities. However, the outline of initiatives provides a useful illustration of the main targets and instruments used by trade unions to preserve their representation base.

In order to understand the differences between the various initiatives implemented by trade unions with the aim of increasing their membership base, it is possible to distinguish two important dimensions (Table 4):

- the level, at which the initiative is targeted – that is, whether the actions refer primarily to the union organisation or the individual worker;
- the focus in terms of trade union representation – that is, whether the initiatives tend to emphasise the input or the outcome of the representation process.

Organising initiatives at the individual level may seek to involve workers through the creation or activation of networks of workers and sometimes of associations, which mobilise around collective goals and thereby recognise the existence of collective interests and identities. The participation in such activities provides an incentive to join the unions, rather than representing a cost. Alternatively, trade unions may emphasise the usefulness and instrumentality of union membership and its capacity to respond to the individual interests of workers. This is usually achieved through the provision of services which are reserved to members, in contrast to the public nature of collectively bargaining, which tends to benefit all workers pertaining to the bargaining unit concerned, irrespective of their membership. Such an individualisation of the advantages related to trade union representation remains in any case embedded in the collective identity which forms the basis of trade unions, as confirmed by the non-profit nature of service provision and by the presence of solidarity among members.

The initiatives where the organisational level prevails tend to affect the structure of trade unions, by formally integrating the representation of certain groups of workers or by redefining the representational domain; alternatively, such initiatives aim to underline the systemic or collective functions performed by trade unions. The latter type of organising strategy basically evokes the importance of collective representation of workers in terms of the protections and advantages that trade union activities can grant. In a way, while organising campaigns centred on the individual level try to motivate people to join a trade union, those which concentrate on the organisational level assume that people are motivated to do so because they are part of a specific group which shares the same interests or values. If the former strategy tries to directly address and solve the free rider problem, the latter assumes that collective identities and values and social norms are usually stronger than individual interests. Individual approaches require direct contact with workers and are developed at micro level, while organisational approaches refer to the macro level of the union organisation and do not compel the actual involvement of workers. At the micro level, the attention focuses on represented workers; at the macro level, the focus is rather on trade union representatives. The levers of membership are different in each case: individual participation and involvement in network-based approaches, individual benefits in interest-based strategies, category representation in group-based initiatives, and the effectiveness of trade union action in activity-based organising.

Table 4: Organising strategies – bases and levers

		Focus	
		Input to representation	Outcome of representation
Level	Individual	Network-based: individual participation	Interest-based: individual benefits
	Organisational	Group-based: category representation	Activity-based: trade union effectiveness

In reality, these four types of organising initiatives can be combined and there are numerous potential links across the two dimensions. However, the proposed taxonomy is useful to identify some basic characteristics of the examples that have been reported by the national correspondents.

Recruitment strategies at organisational level

Typical examples of initiatives at the organisational level are the establishment of special committees or bodies within trade unions which have a representational role with respect to particular groups of workers. A notable case is the creation of women departments and equal opportunity committees. Other widespread experiences concern migrant workers and young workers. This approach can also involve the implementation of particular processes to support the representation of the relevant groups of workers, such as gender mainstreaming or the definition of quotas in the trade union managing bodies. In terms of increased membership, the assumption in this case is that the propensity to join a trade union among specific groups of workers is directly linked to the relevance of the interests of such groups in the decision-making process of that particular union (and to the effects this produces on their working conditions).

Strategies that rely on granting an internal 'voice' to certain groups of workers are widespread and can be found in a number of countries. Austrian trade unions undertook such initiatives, in setting up women departments in sectoral trade unions, as well as at regional and confederal levels. Moreover, they launched a gender mainstreaming plan in 2001, and the Austrian Trade Union Federation ([Österreichischer Gewerkschaftsbund, ÖGB](#)) committed to a proportional representation of women in all of its bodies in 2006. In Belgium, trade unions implemented quite successfully a similar formal strategy for encouraging the involvement of women in unions. In the last wave of workplace elections in the private sector in May 2008, they called for female candidates to run, in an effort to increase the representation of women in company elective bodies ([BE0807029I](#)). In Greece, the Greek Federation of Bank Employee Unions ([Ομοσπονδία Τραπεζοϋπαλληλικών Οργανώσεων Ελλάδας, ΟΤΟΕ](#)) has pursued a similar approach with the creation of a Secretary for Equality position in the early 1990s; the equality secretary contributes to determining bargaining demands at sectoral level. In Luxembourg, the trade unions have special departments to foster the interest representation of particular groups of workers, such as women, young people, retirees, migrants and disabled workers. Similarly, CGTP in Portugal has created in the 1980s special organisational structures for young people ([Interjovem](#)), women, retired workers ([Inter Reformados](#)), migrants, and technical and scientific staff.

With a view to increase the membership of young workers and prepare a generational renewal of the trade unions, the Bulgarian trade union confederation CITUB set up the 'Youth Forum 21st Century (YF21)' in 1999, which was registered as a non-governmental organisation (NGO). YF21 has a regional structure and organises a number of events, including workshops and debates, on both youth and trade union issues. With the support of the Friedrich Ebert Foundation ([Friedrich Ebert Stiftung](#)), YF21 has developed initiatives to establish expert networks on youth and labour issues, as well as networks of young trade unionists to strengthen their skills and position in the trade unions. In Lithuania, the three peak trade union organisations set up youth centres, which mainly provide information to young people, and usually involve representatives of young workers in national and international events. In Slovenia, the Union of Free Trade Unions of Slovenia ([Zveza svobodnih sindikatov Slovenije, ZSSS](#)), with the help of its sectoral

affiliates, tries to set up Committees for young people (*Odbori za mlade*) in unionised workplaces with the aim of raising the involvement of young workers in trade union activities.

A similar strategy of granting a voice to certain groups of workers is when confederations promote the establishment of new trade unions or associations to represent workers in new sectors, or when trade unions reorganise their organisational structure and domains to better reflect the structure of the economy and the labour market. However, if the organisational prerequisite is to specifically cover a certain constituency, it remains to be seen how, in practice, the membership of the new groups of workers is encouraged. In certain circumstances, the establishment of a new trade union only represents the formal side of an organising activity which has already been accomplished; in other cases, it could mark the start of an organising drive. In all of such cases, trade union efforts will most likely concentrate on the other levers: individual participation and benefits or the effectiveness of trade union representation (see Table 4 above).

Activity-based organising does not recognise member recruitment as a distinct aspect of trade union representation. Organising is considered as part of trade unions' daily activities; in other words, organising is not regarded as an independent activity of any ordinary representation task and joint regulation of employment relations. Routine contacts with workers to discuss their problems and working conditions, the monitoring of the application of agreements, the submission of demands to employers, negotiations and other forms of joint-regulation or participatory practices all are seen as crucial factors to maintain and expand trade union membership. The 'mainstreaming organising' of the UK [GMB](#) union is an explicit example in this regard, which also includes specific recruitment targets for union activists and performs a formal assessment of results. In Portugal, CGTP has lately integrated recruitment efforts into its ordinary activities, with an interesting definition of objectives, thereby abandoning the previous campaign-based approach. Alternatively, organising is implicitly assumed when the initiatives emphasise collective bargaining as a means to increase membership. In Latvia, the trade unions tend to focus their attention more on collective bargaining than on organising as such. Therefore, they mostly consider membership growth as an indirect consequence of interest representation, such as the mobilisation of workers at times of collective disputes, as well as negotiations on terms and conditions of employment with employers and, in certain circumstances, on public policies with the government. This was recently the case when the trade unions campaigned for a referendum to amend the Constitution. In Spain, trade unions adopted a similar attitude in order to increase membership among temporary agency workers, by focusing their efforts on the inclusion of the topic of employment security in social concertation. An analogous initiative has been developed in Germany, where the German Metalworkers' Union ([Industriegewerkschaft Metall](#), [IG Metall](#)) started a campaign on granting equal pay for temporary agency workers through [works agreements](#).

Information and awareness-raising campaigns are another way of implicitly focusing on the role and activities of trade unions and their effectiveness in terms of representation. By advertising the advantages of collective representation and bargaining for everyday work practices in campaigns targeted at potential members, the trade unions try to increase the number of people who join the unions. This type of campaign is occasionally launched in all of the countries under examination; examples of such campaigns were reported in the case of Denmark, Finland, Malta, the Netherlands, Spain, Sweden and Slovakia.

An interesting variation of this strategy, which is built on the effectiveness of trade union representation, is when trade unions seek to increase union density in already unionised workplaces rather than extending their efforts to non-union companies. Doing so allows investing fewer resources, as trade union

presence is already established and, in a sense, aims to reduce the ‘free riding’ behaviour on the part of non-members already covered by collective bargaining. An example of this approach was reported in Slovenia, where, in October 2008, the Trade Union of the Maribor Region KNSS ([Sindikat mariborske regije KNSS Neodvisnost](#), [SMBR-KNSS](#)) started a campaign to increase membership in unionised workplaces by direct contacts with workers. SMBR-KNSS claimed that more members would result in greater resources to invest in union activities to represent and protect workers. In 2001, the congress of the Slovakian Confederation of Trade Unions ([Konfederácia odborových zväzov Slovenskej republiky](#), [KOZ SR](#)) launched the ‘National programme for recruiting new union members’, which was primarily aiming to increase membership in unionised workplaces.

Organising strategies at the individual level

Micro-level approaches try to influence the individual motivation to join the unions. Motivation is sought either through the mobilisation and involvement of workers at workplace level – so that participation becomes a reward rather than being considered a cost – or by attaching personal incentives to membership. The latter is usually achieved through the provision of special services, which becomes particularly important when trade unions try to extend membership to workers who cannot be represented in collective bargaining, like in the case of self-employed workers. An interesting trend regarding the provision of specific advantages is the trade unions’ attempt to incorporate in collective bargaining special benefits for members only; this was reported in a limited number of countries.

The most typical examples of organising strategies at the individual level relate to initiatives that try to establish union representation and collective bargaining in non-union workplaces. Such strategies have generally a direct problem-solving orientation, such as improve salaries and working conditions, and can be set off by the intervention of a trade union or solicited by internal actors. Several such experiences were reported by the EIRO national correspondents, including: an organising drive focusing on security guards in the northern city of Hamburg in Germany, which was carried out by the United Services Union ([Vereinte Dienstleistungsgewerkschaft](#), [ver.di](#)); collective actions of the The Independent and Self-Governing Trade Union ‘Solidarity’ ([Niezależny Samorządny Związek Zawodowy Solidarność](#), [NSZZ Solidarność](#)) targeted at the retail sector in Poland in the late 1990s; SIPTU’s collective bargaining campaign in Ireland in 2008; the Commercial Employees’ Union ([Handelsanställidas förbund](#), [Handels](#)) campaign in Sweden in 2008; and the UK campaigns in the white meat processing industry and the cleaning sector (‘Justice for Cleaners’), both launched by [Unite - the Union](#). All of these activities were based on direct contacts with workers at workplaces, with the specific aim to conclude collective agreements. In Hungary, this usually happens when workers are dissatisfied with their pay and working conditions, and demand the intervention of trade unions.

Other organising experiences which are based on the establishment of direct contacts with prospective members are found in the case of young people. A common strategy is trying to involve and recruit young people in education, by visiting vocational schools or universities. In Denmark, the Danish Metalworkers’ Union ([Dansk Metal](#)) and the Union of Commercial and Clerical Employees in Denmark ([Handels- og Kontorfunktionærernes Forbund](#), [HK](#)) have special programmes to recruit new members among apprentices and trainees at technical schools. Similarly, in Finland the Confederation of Unions for Academic Professionals ([Akateemisten Toimihenkilöiden Keskusjärjestö](#), [AKAVA](#)) visits each year vocational schools, higher education institutes and universities, while in Norway a number of trade unions provide membership to students and often have ‘student organisers’. Moreover, the Norwegian

Confederation of Trade Unions ([Landsorganisasjonen i Norge, LO](#)) organises each year a special event devoted to young workers, the Summer Patrol. The Summer Patrol involves visits at workplaces and provides information on employee rights and the role of trade unions to young people employed in summer jobs. An important aim of this initiative is also to control working conditions in summer jobs and intervene in case of violations.

Network-based organising is present in the case of migrant workers, sometimes establishing links with associations of migrants or with NGOs dealing with migrant issues. In Greece, the trade unions have entered into close cooperation with a number of associations with the aim of involving migrants in trade union activities. In Malta, the General Workers' Union ([GWU](#)) is planning to launch a national campaign targeting migrant workers in cooperation with local associations and NGOs, and the General Confederation of Italian Workers ([Confederazione generale italiana del lavoro, Cgil](#)). Other network-based initiatives to organise migrant workers have been carried out in Norway, notably in the construction sector, and in Slovenia, by contacting migrant workers directly at their workplaces.

Besides extending union networks to non-union workplaces and to specific groups of prospective members, trade unions can use internal networks to strengthen their capacity for carrying out their activities, including organising. Interesting examples in this regard were reported in Belgium, France and the UK. In Belgium, since the late 1980s, the trade unions have established networks of contact persons in SMEs to better involve workers in small workplaces in trade union activities. Moreover, they have developed forms of cooperation between trade union representatives in subcontractor and contracting companies, as well as a coaching system of union representatives in SMEs by those of larger companies. In France, the French Democratic Confederation of Labour ([Confédération française démocratique du travail, CFDT](#)) and the French Christian Workers' Confederation ([Confédération française des travailleurs chrétiens, CFTC](#)) have a long tradition of mandating workers to negotiate collective agreements in companies that do not have any union representatives, as it is often the case in SMEs. For instance, more than a third of the collective agreements on the application of the Law on the 35-hour week introduced in 1998 were signed by mandated workers. Trade unions see the involvement of non-members as a way to extend membership and possibly set up union structures in new workplaces. However, the results of such efforts have not been particularly encouraging thus far: according to a study, carried out by the Institute for Economic and Social Research ([Institut de Recherches Économiques et Sociales, IRES](#)), about half of mandated workers who negotiated the 35-hour week agreements joined a trade union at a certain point; their membership, however, tended to be of short duration and only rarely new trade union sections were set up in the relevant companies. In the UK, the [Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers \(Usdaw\)](#) has started a programme to train lay activists to carry out organising in their respective workplaces. After a six-month training programme in organising, they are expected to go back to their job, with a key focus on recruiting and identifying new activists, and selecting issues that are relevant for workers in these workplaces.

A focus on services, or more generally on the possibility to increase the individual incentives to join a trade union, was reported in many cases. For instance, in Luxembourg, trade unions offer a number of services to members, including health plans, insurance coverage and tax advice. In Malta, GWU provides special services to members, including health plans and discounts. An interesting experience of a new union initiative to increase membership has been reported in the Netherlands: trade unions have offered membership-related health and disability coverage as well as pension schemes to construction workers who had left the union because they had entered self-employment, following company reorganisation.

Finnish trade unions have introduced incentives for new members, including lotteries with prizes and reduced fees to join the union; they have also established bonuses for members recruiting new members. The Association of Free Trade Unions of Slovenia ([Zveza svobodnih sindikatov Slovenije, ZSSS](#)) introduced a 'Benefit card' (*Kartica ugodnosti*) in 2006, which offers all members a number of benefits in the form of discounts for shopping and services. The initiative was promoted through the ZSSS website and posters in unionised workplaces. In 2008, members were offered the possibility to include further services and discounts in their Benefit card for an additional fee. In Slovakia, KOZ SR has started an initiative called the 'Service programme' offering selective services to trade union members only. In some cases, the creation of specific services was reported for certain groups of workers, such as migrant workers (Cyprus, Ireland and Portugal) and unemployed people (Luxembourg and Greece).

In Ireland, several trade unions, together with the [Irish Congress of Trade Unions \(ICTU\)](#), devised the 'Outreach plan' in 2007. The plan includes a number of web- and phone-based services at a flat rate, which are thought to be particularly appealing to young and computer-literate workers. It thus aims to extend membership to non-traditional groups of workers. With a similar objective, trade unions in the Netherlands have launched solely internet-based union services. For instance, the general independent trade union for professionals and managers, [De Unie](#), started in 2006 an initiative to offer membership at a greatly discounted fee (€10 a year) for selected internet-based services. This reduced membership fee does not include, for instance, free legal advice in case of individual disputes and membership to strike funds. The target of such initiatives is particularly younger workers who may not seek union membership for other types of services. The [De Unie](#) internet membership includes, for instance, access to information and assistance on labour issues at a flat rate of €10 per query after the first free question, as well as training and career development at discounted rates.

Interestingly, in some cases, trade unions have tried to overcome the traditional nature of union representation and collective bargaining being a 'public good', by limiting consultations to members rather than employees and by reserving certain gains to members. For instance, IG Metall in North-Rhine Westphalia in western Germany launched a comprehensive strategy to support membership, which was essentially based on linking trade union actions to members. For instance, decisions on agreements on opting out from sectoral accords were taken by consulting members only, rather than all employees. Moreover, IG Metall's commitment to undertake negotiations with company management was conditional on the workplace being well organised. The union also tried to include in agreements, particularly in case of opt-outs, special benefits for members. A similar strategy has been proposed in France by the President of the French Confederation of Professional and Managerial Staff – General Confederation of Professional and Managerial Staff ([Confédération française de l'encadrement – Confédération générale des cadres, CFE-CGC](#)), Bernard Van Craeynest, at the confederation's congress in 2006. Mr Van Craeynest stated that certain elements of collective agreements at company level, such as profit sharing schemes, could be reserved to the members of the unions that have signed the relevant accord.

Commentary

With few exceptions, trade union membership and density have gradually declined in many European countries in recent years. However, trade unions' institutional recognition, and also their role in regulating the labour market and, more generally, the economy, do not seem to be weakening. Indeed, even in countries where the difficulties of trade union organisations would seem more evident due to low and

declining density levels, social dialogue and concertation provide an essential arena for the representation of labour interests, especially in continental Europe.

Trade unions are developing many membership initiatives, with some significant success, both in terms of maintaining and increasing their membership numbers. The different strategies and sometimes innovative ways of recruiting new members contribute to the emergence of a somewhat dynamic picture. Key aspects of trade union activities remain crucial, notably the integration of organising in day-to-day activities, and also the focus on traditional collective identities and the role and effectiveness of trade union representation in improving wage levels and working conditions. However, the need for different types of organising activities is increasingly acknowledged and greater attention is devoted to designing new strategies. Recruiting new members and extending the reach of union representation seem to feature high on the agenda of trade unions, as special resources are being mobilised for this purpose. Nevertheless, this is not a general trend, and no substantial effects have yet been recorded regarding membership levels.

One of the main challenges for trade unions is the decline of the scope of their constituency, as employment in traditionally unionised sectors like manufacturing and public administration is decreasing. Therefore, many trade union efforts are concentrated in economic sectors – such as private services – and segments of the labour market – such as temporary agency workers, migrant and young workers – that often show lower-than-average unionisation. In fact, labour market segmentation often results in an overlapping of such situations: for instance, migrant and young workers are frequently employed under temporary agency contracts in the private services sector, so that trade unions have to address these situations more or less at the same time. While young workers and migrants show lower union density levels almost in every country covered by this study, the integration of women in European trade unions presents different characteristics. On the one hand, trade union membership levels of women have significantly improved in recent years, such that the gap between male and female membership rates has narrowed considerably. In some countries, especially in the Nordic and some central and eastern European countries, women are more unionised than men and represent a considerable proportion, sometimes even the majority, of new members. This partly results from the sectoral shift in unionisation – that is, from the manufacturing to the services sector – and the growing importance of the public sector in union membership. The latter is a sector of activity where both female employment and trade union affiliation are usually high. On the other hand, a substantial gender gap remains in terms of positions within trade union managing and executive bodies. Some action in this area has been reported, mostly in the form of gender mainstreaming initiatives and the setting of quotas or targets for elective positions.

The increasing heterogeneity of union membership in terms of, for example, gender, age, ethnic background, economic sectors, education and qualification levels, is being reflected in the way that trade unions experiment with different types or levels of membership, such as: student membership, reduced fees for reduced services, flat-rate membership with pay-on-demand services, special 'online' membership, services for self-employed workers who cannot reap the benefits of collective bargaining. These are mainly initiatives that focus on the individual benefits of joining a union, as well as on the particular balance between personal costs (essentially in terms of fees) and individual benefits (the services attached to membership). Such emphasis on personal advantages is also being pursued through the attempt of reserving, at least partly, the fruit of collective representation and bargaining to members, as shown by the experience of the German IG Metall in the North-Rhine Westphalia region.

More generally, the concrete and possible benefits of trade union representation for the workers involved are at the centre of organising initiatives at workplace level. It is interesting to note in this regard that increasing attention has been paid to organising techniques and experiences in countries outside the EU, with exchanges taking place including the involvement of senior trade unionists. Even if this tendency has involved only a limited number of countries thus far, it may become more significant in the future. For example, in Ireland a number of innovative actions were undertaken following the proposals of a committee on trade union renewal, which was chaired by a senior Australian organiser; in Germany, ver.di developed some of its campaigns with the help and support of US organisers, while in Poland a cooperation between the Solidarity union and the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations ([AFL-CIO](#)) already began in the mid-1990s.

It should be noted, however, that the initiatives seeking to expand trade union membership usually require the investment of important organisational and financial resources. Therefore, the trade unions best equipped for organising such initiatives tend to be those which may need it less, notably those that have extensive organisational structures and high membership levels. The government-supported programmes, for instance, that were launched in the Baltic countries to favour the strengthening of collective representation can be interpreted as a means to overcome this problem, given the crucial contribution that industrial relations can make to social cohesion. In Belgium, the major trade union confederation the General Christian Trade Union ([Algemeen Christelijk Vakverbond/Confédération des syndicats chrétiens, ACV/CSC](#)), set up a specific department devoted to support organising initiatives – the ‘Movement team’ (*Bewegingsploeg / Équipe animation en groupe spécifique*). ACV/CSC also set up a special innovation fund which subsidises a number of innovative projects in the field of organising. Furthermore, great attention to organising activities was highlighted in the case of Ireland and the UK, with the creation of specific teams and functions within union organisations devoted to the recruitment of new members. This has also been reported in the case of Germany and many Nordic countries. It is worthwhile noting that part of this pooling of resources is achieved through trade union cooperation, also with trade unions and organisers outside the EU. Other examples of inter-union help can be found where local trade unions have scarce resources or address new issues. This was the case in Malta where trade unions addressed the issue of migrant workers with the help of the Italian Cgil confederation. In some central and eastern European countries, trade unions made every effort to unionise multinational companies (MNCs), often with the support of the trade unions in the company’s home country or the European Works Council (EWC). Such initiatives demonstrate the unions’ search for new strategies to reinforce their constituency and are possibly a direct response to the globalisation of the economy, which represents a major challenge to the effectiveness of union representation.

So, industrial relations actors usually appear to be able to find the resources required to pursue their representation roles by taking advantage of the various elements of the economic and institutional environment in which they operate. This adaptability highlights the strength rather than the decline of the collective method to regulate labour relations.

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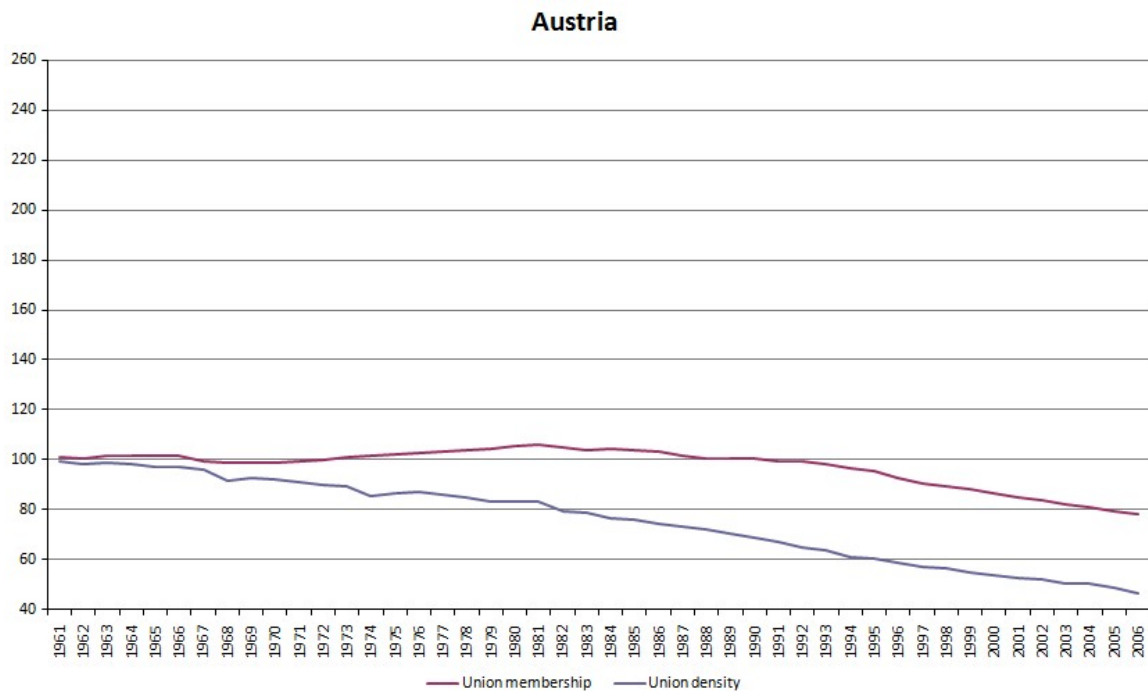
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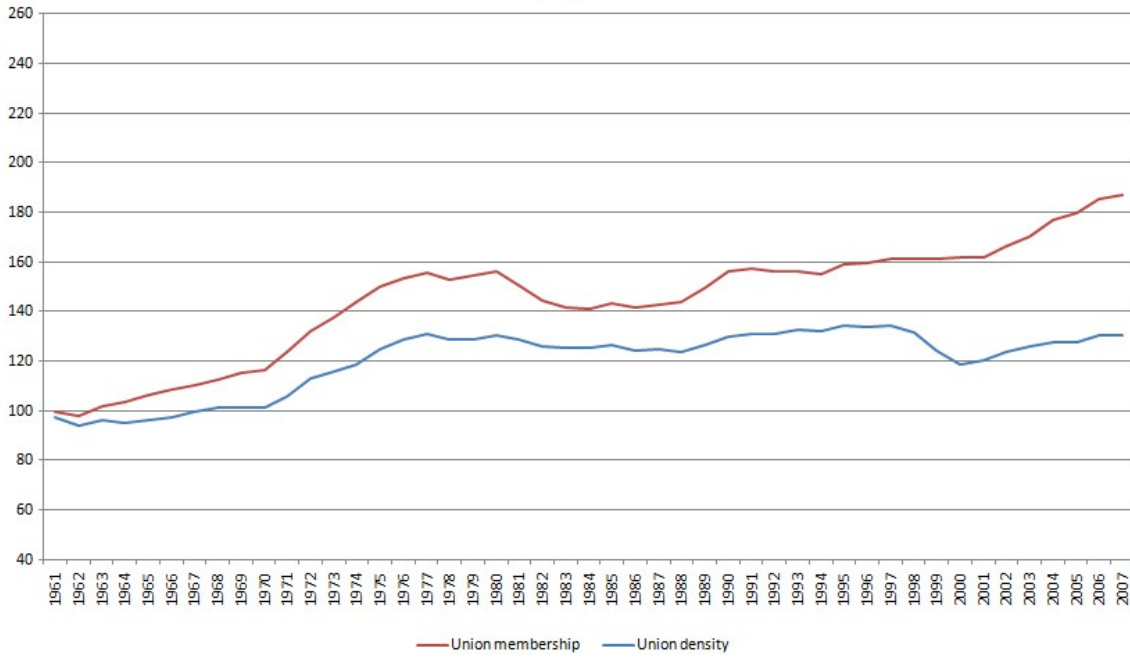
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Annex

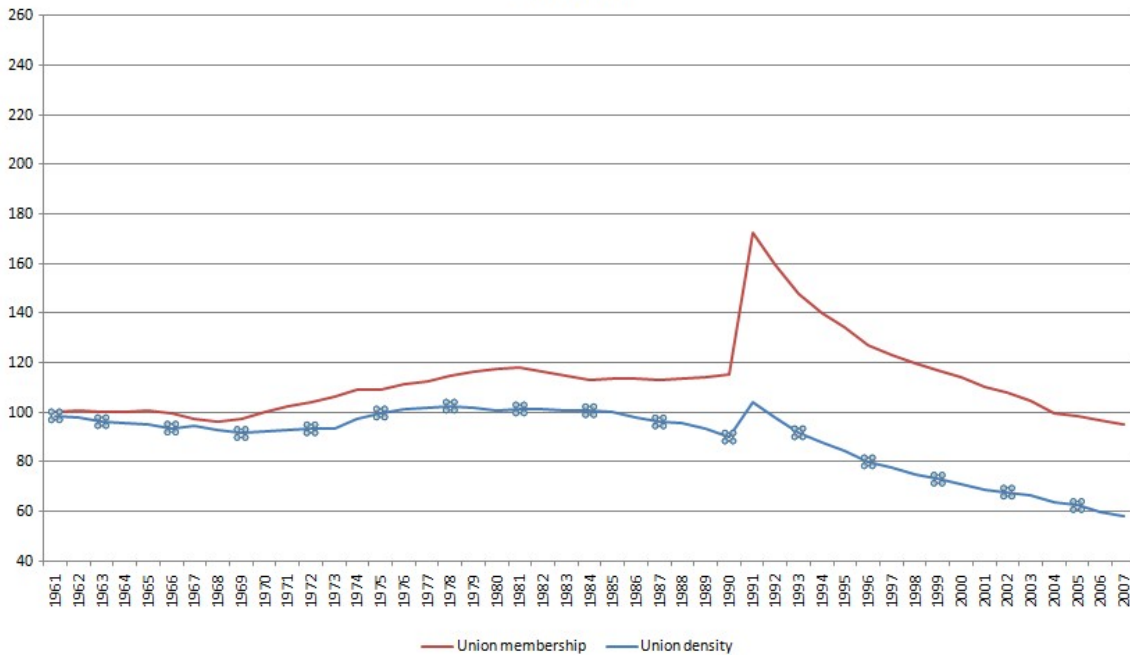
Figure A1: Trade union membership and density in 13 EU countries and Norway, 1960–2007 (index numbers, 1960=100)*



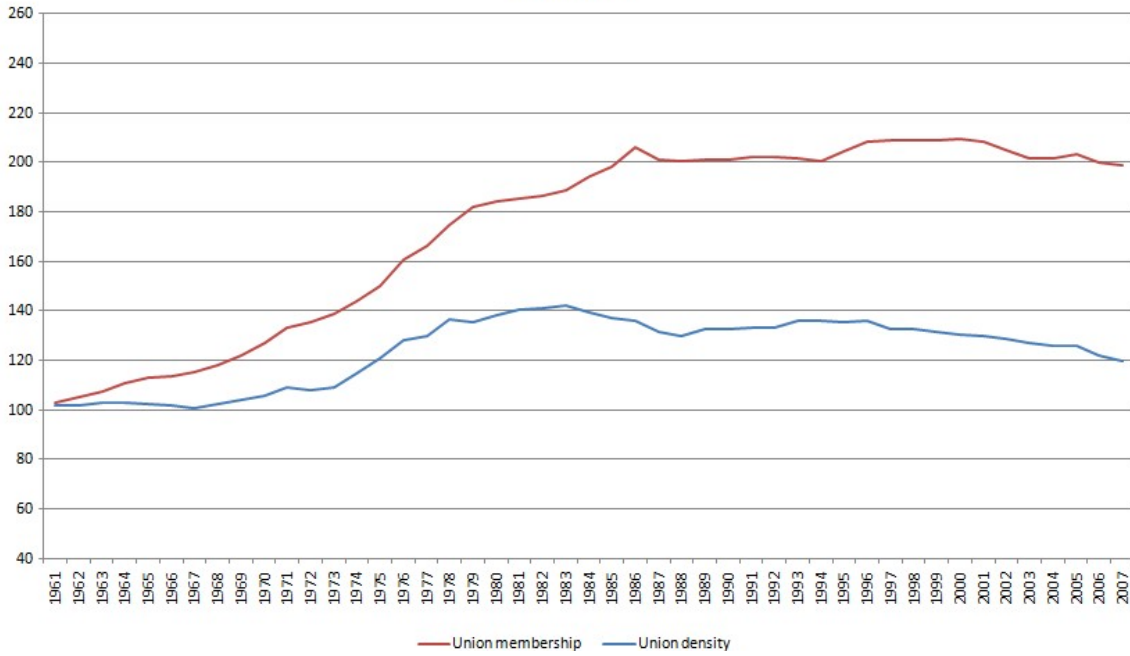
Belgium



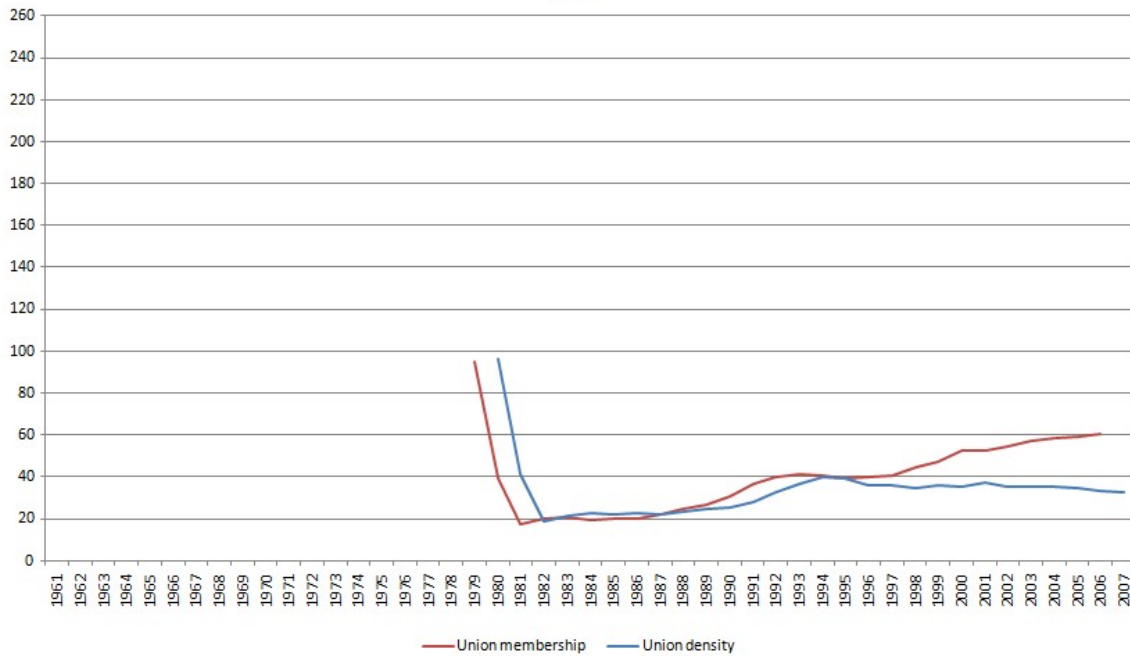
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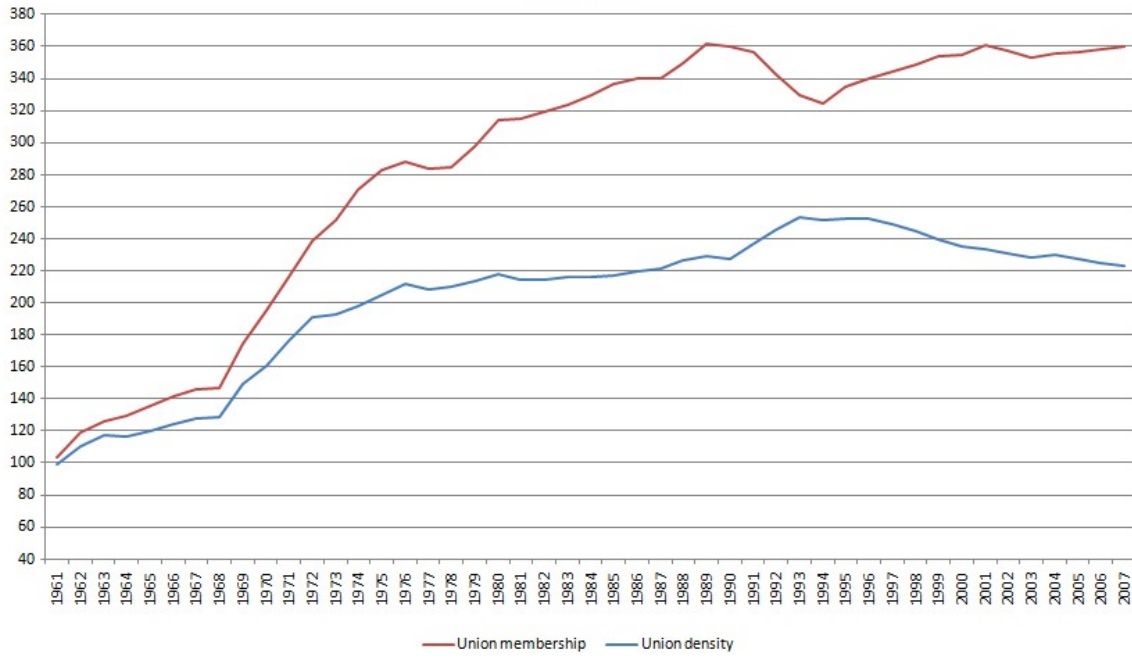
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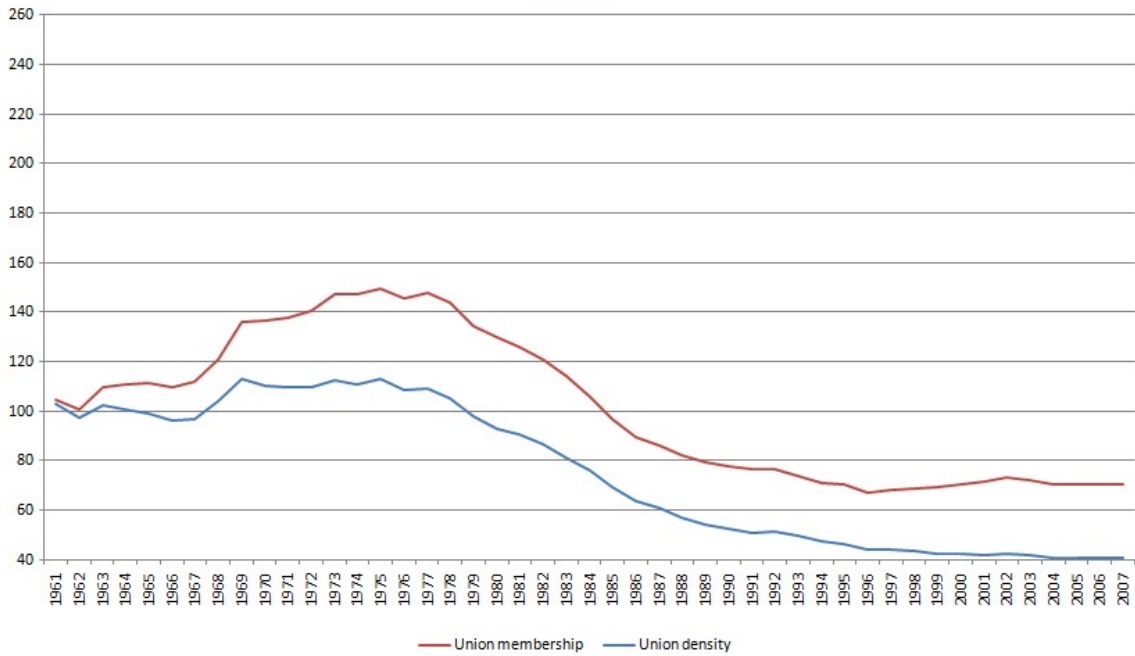
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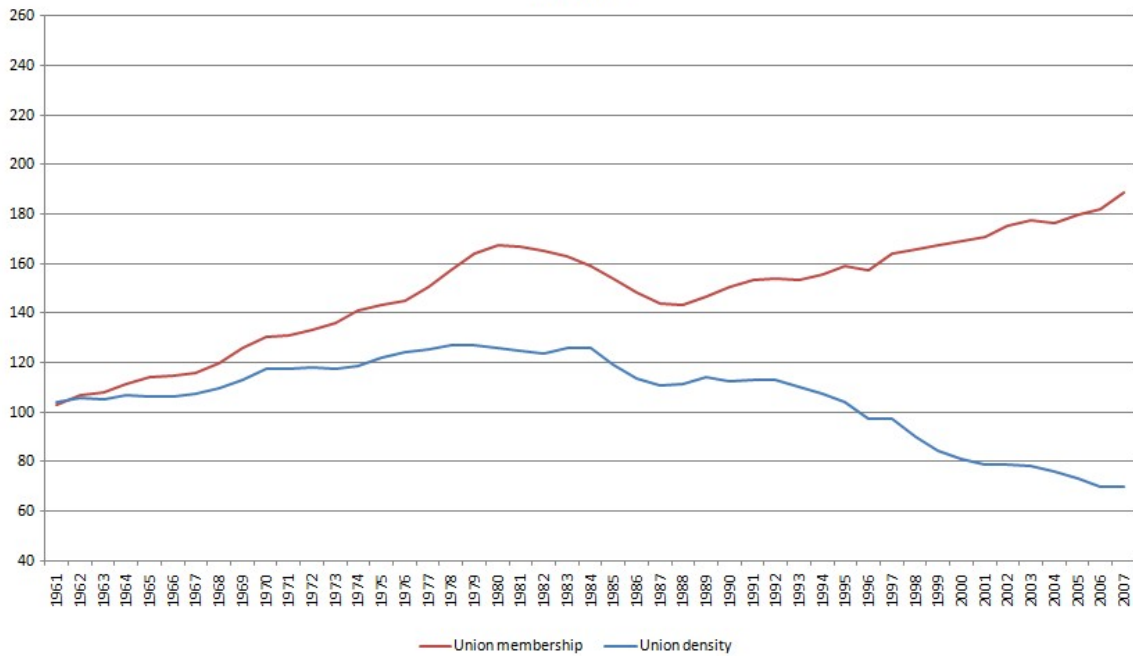
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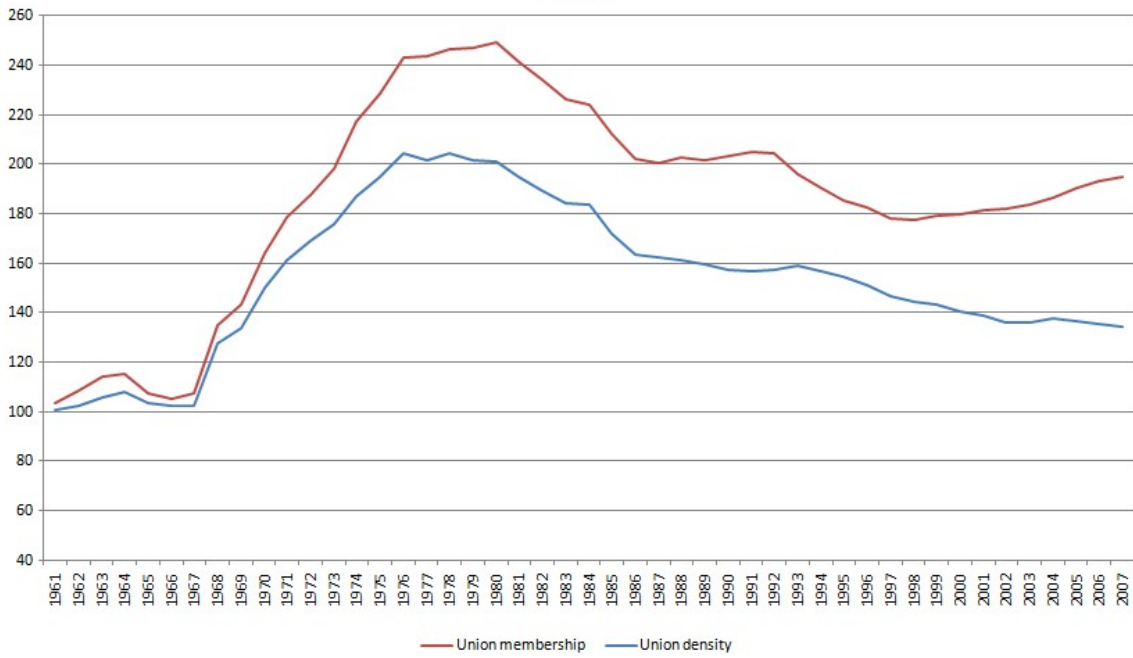
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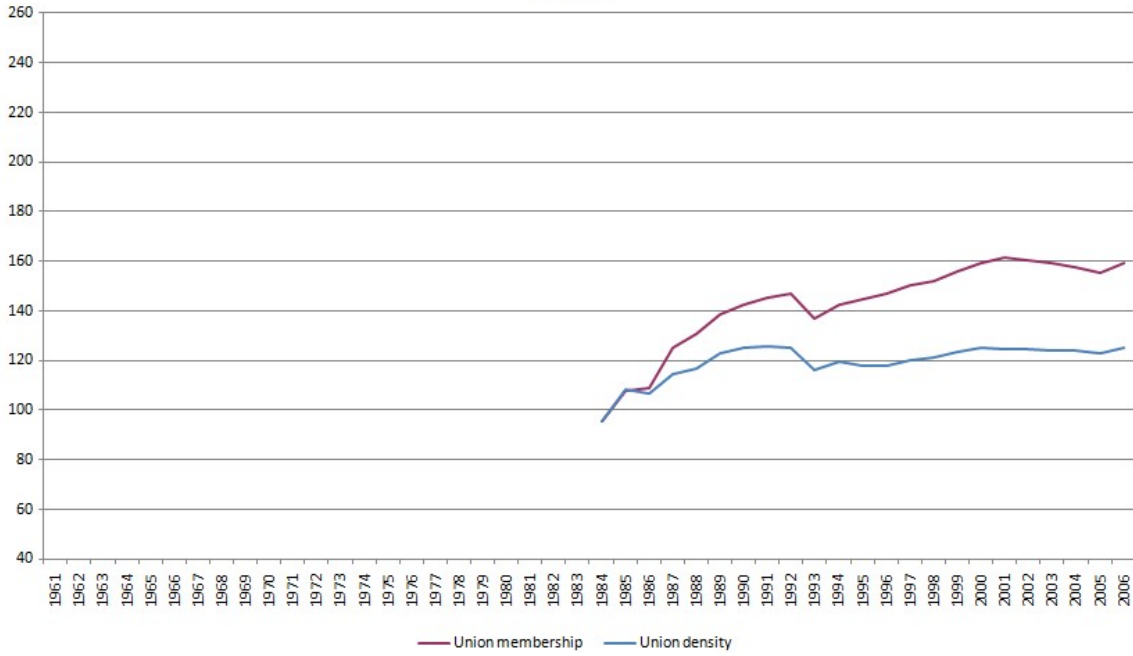
Ireland



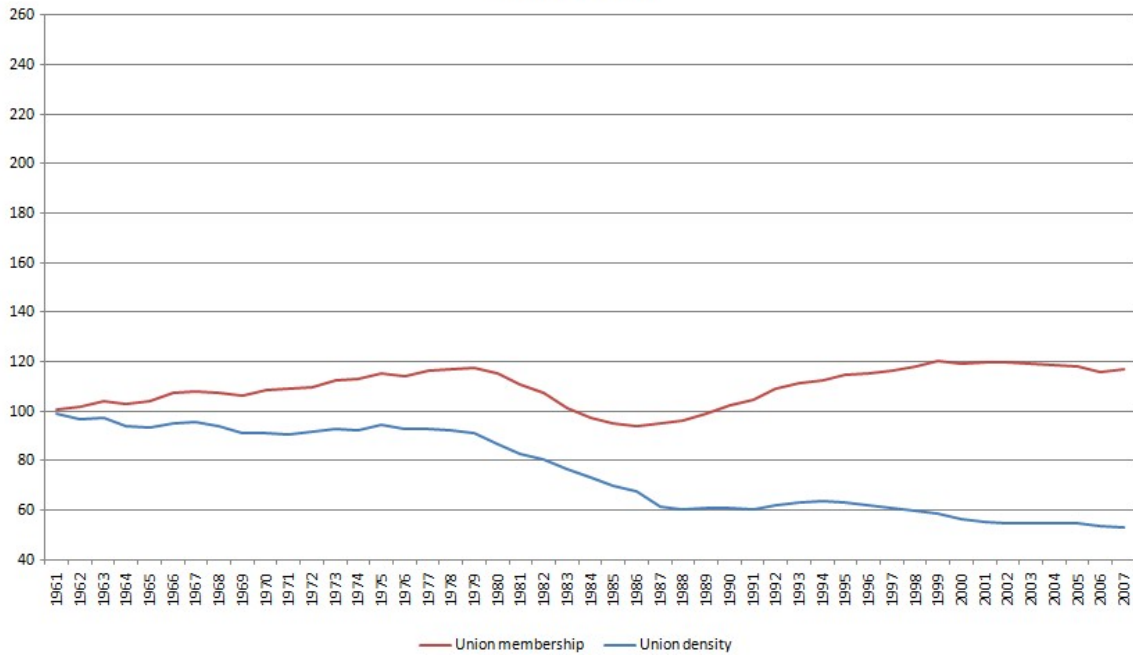
Italy



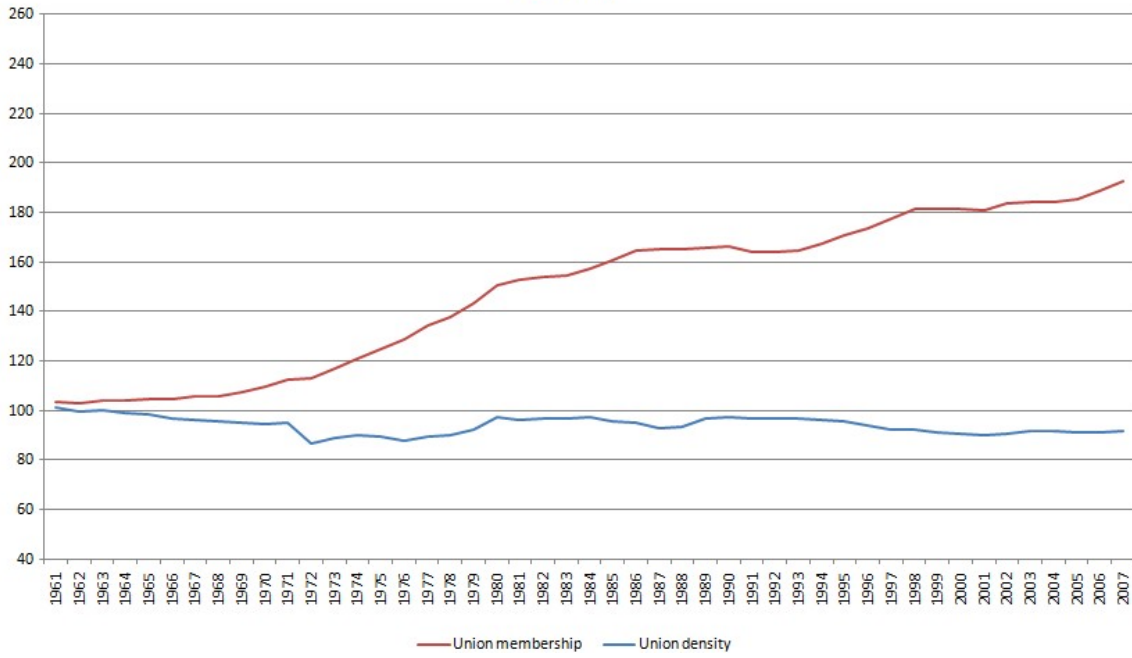
Malta



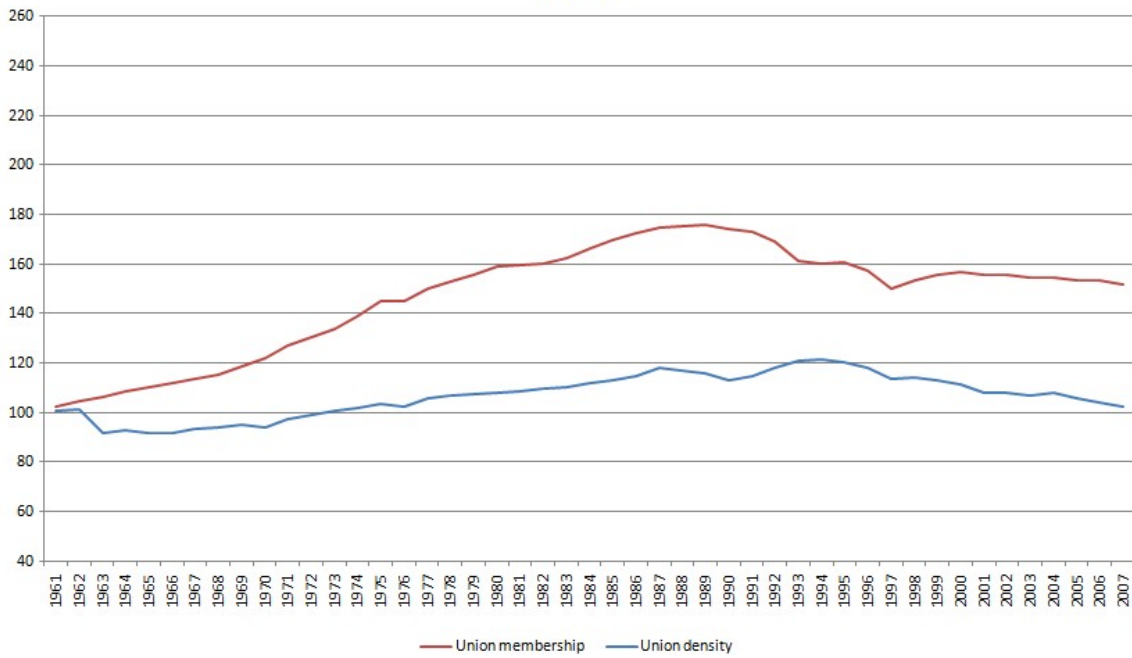
Netherlands

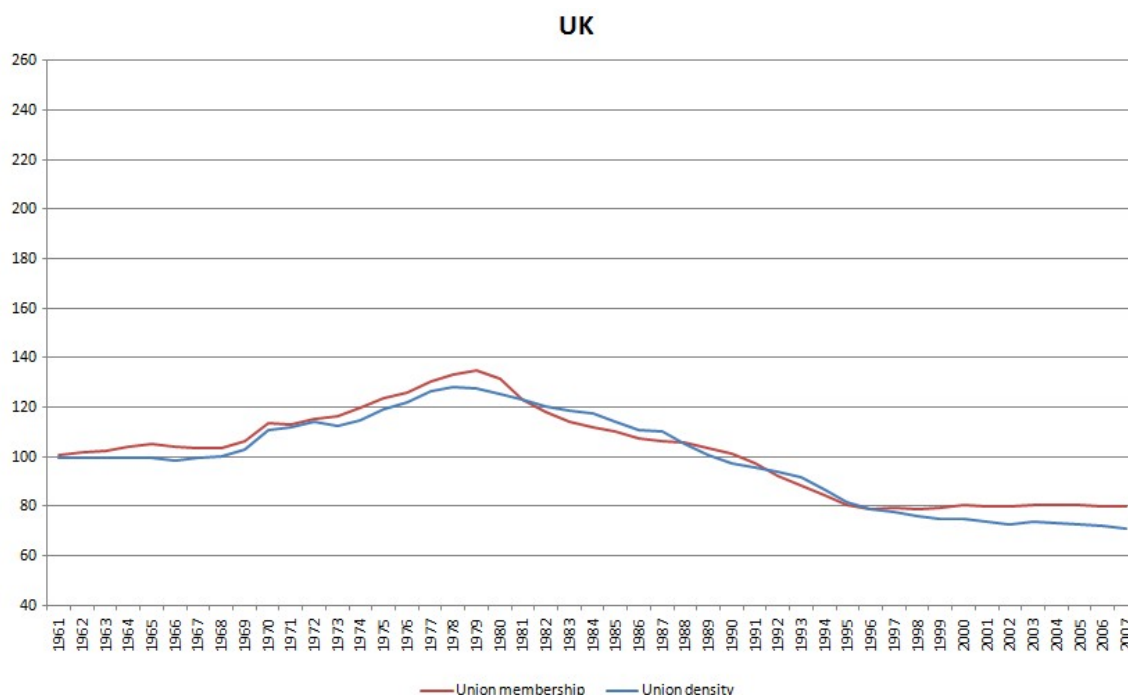


Norway



Sweden





Notes: * Data for Austria 1960–2006, Spain 1978–2006 with 1978=100, and Malta 1983–2007 with 1983=100.

All graphs are in the same scale to provide an immediate illustration of cross-countries differences, except in the cases of Finland and Spain. These countries needed an upward and downward ‘extension’, because Finnish trade unions reached an almost four-fold growth rate in membership over the observation period and Spanish trade unions suffered a steep decline in both indicators in the wake of democratisation.

Source: [ICTWSS Database](#)

Table A1: Examples of trade unions’ organising initiatives in the EU and Norway

Country	Initiatives
AT	<p>Women</p> <p>Women departments have been set up in sectoral trade unions, and at regional and confederal levels. In 2001, ÖGB launched a gender mainstreaming plan, and in 2006 it committed to proportional representation of women in all of its bodies.</p>
	<p>Specific groups of workers</p> <p>In the early 2000s, a reorganisation of the Union of Salaried Employees, Graphical Workers and Journalists (Gewerkschaft der Privatangestellten, Druck, Journalismus, Papier, GPA-DJP) included the establishment of specific sections (<i>Interessensgemeinschaften</i>, IGs) to address</p>

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	<p>the representation of the interests and demands of specific groups of the workforce, including non-standard employment (IG work@flex) and migrants (IG work@migration).</p>
	<p>Call centres</p> <p>In 2006, GPA-DJP launched an initiative to promote the conversion of service contracts into open-ended employment contracts in call centres, and improve the terms and condition of employment. An action day was organised in late May 2006 to inform workers of their rights and draw the public attention to this phenomenon. Also a web site and a phone line were set up to provide information and contacts to the workers involved. This has led to the conversion of some 1,000 jobs into regular employment contracts, the establishment of works councils and the improvement of working conditions in call centres.</p>
BE	<p>SMEs</p> <p>Since the late 1980s, Belgian trade unions have focused on the involvement of workers in SMEs, especially through the creation of networks of contact persons and by developing personal services. This strategy also includes the establishment of local branches with open meetings, a network of trade union representatives from subcontracting and contracting companies, and coaching of representatives in SMEs by those of larger companies.</p>
	<p>Women</p> <p>With a view to increase the involvement of women in trade unions, the ACV/CSC has established special structures and committees, and implemented gender mainstreaming measures, with the aim of having one third of female representation in executive bodies by 2006. The goal has not yet been reached. Other trade unions have undertaken similar initiatives. In 2004, the three national confederations ACV/CSC, the Belgian General Confederation of Labour (Algemeen Belgisch Vakverbond/ Fédération Générale du Travail de Belgique, ABVV/FGTB) and the Federation of Liberal Trade Unions of Belgium (Algemene Centrale der Liberale Vakbonden van België/Centrale Générale des Syndicats Libéraux de Belgique, ACLVB/CGSLB) signed a Charter for equality of women and men in trade unions</p>
	<p>Students</p> <p>Both ACV/CSC and ABVV/FGTB have special programmes for students, which include free membership, information campaigns, advice for employed students and specific initiatives on social rights and issues (such as employment contract, salary and unemployment) at completion of their educational career.</p>
BG	<p>Special sectors and regions</p> <p>Following a special survey by Institute for Social and Trade Union Research (Институтът за синдикални и социални изследвания, ISTUR). CITUB engaged in organising activities focused on particular industries – such as retail, catering, textiles, agro-industry, construction, media and private security – and regions. The activities included information campaigns, building networks with associations and NGOs, the provision of special services and the</p>

	<p>reorganisation of the confederation.</p>
	<p>Youth</p> <p>In order to increase the membership of young workers and prepare a generational renewal of the trade unions, in 1999 CITUB set up the Youth Forum 21st Century (YF21), which was registered as an NGO. YF21 has a regional structure and organises a number of events, including workshops and debates, on both youth and trade union issues. With the support of the Friedrich Ebert Foundation, YF21 has developed initiatives to establish networks of experts on youth and labour issues, as well as of young trade unionists to strengthen their skills and position in the trade unions.</p>
	<p>Higher education and science</p> <p>In the early 2000s, CITUB started an organising campaign in universities and other academic institutes. In 2001, the Independent Branch Trade Union of Higher Education and Science - CITUB (IBTU- HES) was established. At present, local branches have been set up in almost all of the country's academic organisations and membership reached 3,500 members in 2007, up from only 100 members in 2001.</p>
	<p>Podkrepa CL – Varna</p> <p>The regional branch of Podkrepa CL has developed new information and personal services with a view to increase its membership base.</p>
CY	<p>Women and young people</p> <p>Since 2000, Democratic Labour Federation of Cyprus (Δημοκρατική Εργατική Ομοσπονδία, DEOK) has operated an Equality and Equal Treatment Department. In 2006–2006, Cyprus Workers' Confederation (Συνομοσπονδία Εργαζομένων Κύπρου, SEK) carried out an information campaign focused on women. A similar initiative had focused on young workers in 2004–2005</p>
	<p>Specific sectors</p> <p>DEOK set up the Hotels and Tourism Employees Union in 2000. PEO established the Pancyprian Union of Services Workers (Παγκύπρια Συντεχνία Εργαζομένων στις Υπηρεσίες, PASEY) in 2002. Both initiatives aimed to integrate new workers in the trade union movement.</p>
	<p>Migrants</p> <p>In 2002, PEO set up a Migrant Workers Bureau with the objective to provide specific information and support to migrants. In recent years, DEOK launched an information campaign to organise foreign workers.</p>
	<p>Turkish Cypriots</p> <p>All trade unions have special programmes and initiatives to inform and involve Turkish</p>

	Cypriots.
CZ	<p>Economic sectors</p> <p>The Metalworkers' Trade Union (Odborový svaz KOVO, OS KOVO) and the Czech-Moravian Trade Union of Workers in Education (Českomoravský odborový svaz pracovníků školství, ČMOS PŠ), both members of the major Czech confederation Czech-Moravian Confederation of Trade Unions (Českomoravská konfederace odborových svazů, ČMKOS), carried out specific analyses examining the barriers to unionisation and then implemented new recruitment and communication strategies.</p>
DE	<p>Sectors and regions</p> <p>IG Metall in North-Rhine Westphalia started a comprehensive strategy to support membership, which was essentially based on linking trade union actions to members. For instance, decisions on agreements on opting out from sectoral accords were taken by consulting members only, rather than all employees. Moreover, the union commitment to undertake negotiations with company management was conditional on the workplace being well organised. IG Metall also tried to include in collective agreements, particularly as regards opt-outs provisions, special benefits for members. The union also tried to involve young people in vocational schools.</p> <p>Temporary agency workers</p> <p>Following a substantial increase in temporary agency workers in the metalworking sector. IG Metall launched a special campaign targeted at this kind of employment contract, entitled 'Equal pay for equal work' (<i>Gleiche Arbeit – Gleiches Geld</i>). IG Metall seeks to reach company-level agreements in workplaces where at least 10% of the workforce consists of temporary agency workers.</p> <p>Security guards</p> <p>Ver.di, in cooperation with the US-based Service Employees International Union (SEIU), launched in 2006 a campaign to organise security guards in Hamburg. Interestingly, ver.di aimed to adapt organising techniques taken from the US experience and engaged some full-time officers who had been trained by a leading SEIU organiser. The success of this initiative induced ver.di to implement similar campaigns in 2007 and 2008 to further test this new approach.</p>
DK	<p>General campaigns</p> <p>The United Federation of Danish Workers (Fagligt Fælles Forbund, 3F) and HK launched national campaigns to sustain membership, by highlighting trade unions' role in dealing with labour and social issues through collective bargaining and the provision of training and pension schemes. HK, in particular, has also underlined the role that trade unions have to play in building the future of society.</p> <p>Youth</p>

	<p>Dansk Metal and HK have special programmes to recruit new members among apprentices and trainees at technical schools. LO has also special sections of young union members who carry out information campaigns on the role of trade unions specifically targeted at young people.</p>
EE	<p>General campaigns</p> <p>In 2005, Confederation of Estonian Trade Unions (Eesti Ametiühingute Keskliit, EAKL) conducted a street campaign in nine cities to inform people about the activities of the trade union and establish first contacts with potential members.</p>
	<p>Youth</p> <p>EAKL regularly participates in information fairs for young people entering the labour market where it presents the activities of trade unions.</p>
	<p>Multinational companies (MNCs)</p> <p>In the framework of a project of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) in the Baltic countries, some members of EAKL and one affiliate of the Estonian Employees' Unions' Confederation (Teenistujate Ametiliitude Keskorganisatsioon, TALO) started organising campaigns in selected MNCs.</p>
EL	<p>General initiatives</p> <p>In 2000, the Greek General Confederation of Labour (Γενική Συνομοσπονδία Εργατών Ελλάδας, GSEE) set up a network of Information Centres for Workers and Unemployed People (KEPEA) in order to develop contacts between the active population and trade unions. The centres provide a number of information services in the fields of labour legislation and social security, legal advice and assistance, support jobseekers in job search activities and help identify individual training paths. They also offer special services to migrant workers.</p>
	<p>Women</p> <p>OTOE established a Secretariat for Equality in the early 1990s, following the experience of the Women's Committee which had started in the 1980s. The Secretariat submits proposals to the OTOE executive for specific demands to be included in the collective bargaining platforms for sectoral negotiations. It also carries out a broad range of activities to further women representation and foster equal opportunities.</p>
	<p>Migrants</p> <p>The trade unions have developed dense cooperation with a number of associations of migrants to promote the involvement of migrant workers in trade union activities. For instance, the Observatory and Institutions Network for the Empowerment of Economic Migrants and Refugees in the Labour Market was created in the context of the EQUAL Community Initiative by a project which ran in 2005–2007.</p>

	<p>Atypical workers</p> <p>In recent years, the trade unions have started to set up unions for workers with atypical work contracts, mainly at sectoral level. Since most of the traditional trade unions only organise workers on open-ended employment relationships. These new unions include the Seasonal Firefighters Union and the Pan-Hellenic Union of Employees Providing Labour to Third Parties (PASYPET).</p>
ES	<p>General campaigns</p> <p>Trade unions carry out a number of campaigns targeting specific groups of workers, especially focused on information, awareness-raising and on particular issues, such as equal treatment and occupational stability.</p>
	<p>Social concertation and collective bargaining</p> <p>Trade unions have pursued a strategy to include in social concertation and collective bargaining a number of issues to extend the capacity of industrial relations to meet the needs of more workers. For instance, particular reference was made to temporary agency workers since the 1997 Multi-Sector Agreement for Employment Stability until the latest Agreement for the Improvement of Growth and Employment in 2006. More generally, collective bargaining was extended to cover topics such as working time and work–life balance, non-discrimination and equal treatment in access to training and professional promotion, employment security by limiting the use of temporary employment contracts, and work-related health risks.</p>
FI	<p>General campaigns</p> <p>In 2005–2006, Central Organisation of Finnish Trade Unions (Suomen Ammattiliittojen Keskusjärjestö, SAK) launched an information campaign on the role and benefits of trade unions called <i>Liikkeessä</i>, which means ‘on the move’ or ‘within the movement’. The campaign runs on television and in newspapers, in addition to leaflets and workplace visits.</p>
	<p>Young people</p> <p>Various new techniques have been explored to expand membership among young workers, including ‘snow ball’ emails and attaching some sort of lottery with prizes to new members. AKAVA organisers conduct an annual recruitment campaign by visiting vocational schools, higher education institutes and universities. This has brought about a high union density rate among students, which is close to 100%.</p>
	<p>Incentives</p> <p>Incentives for new members have included lotteries, reduced ‘entry’ membership fees, and prizes for members recruiting new members.</p>
FR	<p>SMEs</p> <p>Many trade unions are targeting SMEs especially through information campaigns. CFDT and</p>

	<p>CFTC have a long tradition of mandating non-union members to negotiate collective agreements in companies that do not have union representatives, as is often the case in SMEs. This practice was significantly reinforced in the wake of the 1998 Law on the 35-hour working week; more than one third of such agreements were signed by mandated workers. Such involvement is seen by the trade unions as a way to extend membership and possibly set up union structures in new workplaces.</p>
	<p>Specific groups of workers</p> <p>In recent years many trade unions have launched organising activities, focusing on certain groups of workers. For instance, CGT set a target of reaching one million members in its 2003 congress and started in 2004 a national campaign centred mainly on SMEs, young people and workers with non standard employment contracts. The General Confederation of Labour – <i>Force ouvrière</i> (Confédération générale du travail – Force ouvrière, CGT-FO) adopted the first ever resolution entirely devoted to organising at its 2007 congress. The resolution focuses in particular on young people, executives and pensioners and is to be implemented by sectoral unions.</p>
HU	<p>Metalworking sector</p> <p>The metalworking union Vasasszakszervezet, which maintains regional offices and a relatively large central office, has developed with the help and support of various European metalworking federations a number of initiatives to support the establishment of company unions and the recruitment of new members. Key components of Vasas’ organising strategy are direct contacts with non-union workplaces to disseminate information and provide support, as well as contacts between local organisers and regional offices. Sometimes, in the case of MNCs, the involvement of metalworkers’ trade unions in the company headquarters has been crucial to solve disputes within Hungarian subsidiaries.</p> <p>Company level</p> <p>The establishment of new trade unions generally begins as a ‘bottom-up’ process by workers dissatisfied with their wages and working conditions. Since this is a kind of ‘last resort’ initiative by employees, when other informal conciliation attempts have failed, it usually involves conflict. The support of external trade union federations and confederations is therefore crucial to overcome the frequent resistance by employers. Crucial can be the mobilisation of public support and, in the case of MNCs, the involvement of company headquarters and the cooperation with other European trade unions, especially within European Works Councils.</p>
IE	<p>‘Outreach’ plan</p> <p>In 2007, ICTU and five trade unions – namely, SIPTU, IMPACT, the Communications Workers Union (CWU), Technical Engineering and Electrical Union (TEEU) and the retail union Mandate – launched an ‘outreach’ initiative, which was initially to be implemented in Cork and Waterford. In these areas where union presence is already established, the objective is to extend membership beyond the traditional constituency by involving younger and computer literate people through on-line, phone and written responses to queries. Services will also be</p>

	<p>tailored to specific groups of workers, such as migrants. The campaign is supported by TV, radio, web and press advertisements, as well as direct mailings.</p>
	<p>SIPTU reorganisation</p> <p>SIPTU has launched a reorganisation strategy in 2008, following the report of a special commission on the union's future chaired by the Australian union organiser Mike Crosby. The reorganisation plan includes the implementation of a sectoral structure to replace the existing regional organisation, the limitation of resources devoted to handling individual worker grievances with a view to free resources for organising initiatives and for involving members in individual activities. In particular, SIPTU should be spending 25% of its contribution income on organising – up from the present 6%–8%.</p>
	<p>Temporary agency workers</p> <p>SIPTU launched a national campaign to improve the working conditions of temporary agency workers in late 2007. This included an information and awareness-raising campaign targeted at members, employers, politicians and the public at large, as well as a recruitment campaign of temporary agency workers.</p>
	<p>Retail sector</p> <p>In 2008, Mandate announced major changes in their organisation and a shift from a 'servicing' trade union to an 'organising and campaigning' union, with efforts to extend membership to non-union workplaces. The trade union developed a special Organising and Training facility and established a National Coordinator of Organising, Campaigning and Recruitment. This initiative has been developed with the help of international senior union organisers.</p>
IT	<p>Freelance workers and atypical jobs</p> <p>A number of associations have been set up and been integrated into the major trade union confederations to provide interest representation to freelance workers, as well as workers in atypical forms of employment. They usually provide advice and services on legal issues, pensions, training, pay levels, access to credit and job vacancies, together with representation in collective bargaining on standard employment contracts. In certain circumstances, the trade unions have accompanied the transformation of service contracts into dependent employment. Following the recent law on the 'stabilisation' of service contracts in the public sector, the trade unions, besides assistance in the transformation process, have sought to increase recruitment among these workers.</p>
LT	<p>Programme for strengthening social dialogue 2007–2013</p> <p>The government has initiated a programme to support the strengthening of social dialogue in order to overcome the difficulties linked to the weakness and scarce resources of trade unions. The programme includes various initiatives, notably: direct contacts with workers at workplaces through training and seminars, information of the public through TV, radio and press campaigns, support for the establishment of bipartite committees at all levels, legal</p>

	<p>assistance and counselling.</p>
	<p>Youth</p> <p>All three peak trade union organisations pay particular attention to young people through information and awareness-raising campaigns. The trade unions set up youth centres which organise events and provide information to young workers on a number of topics, such as broad economic and social issues and more focused trade union activities and roles. Peak trade unions usually involve the representatives of young workers in their national and international events.</p>
	<p>Retail and shopping mall workers</p> <p>In 2007, following a strike in a supermarket, the three peak union organisations started a campaign in the large-scale retail sector. This has led to a significant improvement in union membership and the establishment of a number of trade unions in shopping malls.</p>
LU	<p>Cross-border workers</p> <p>The issue of cross-border workers is significant in Luxembourg, and there are specific agreements between trade unions in neighbouring countries which aim to provide these workers with appropriate protections. The Luxembourg Confederation of Christian Trade Unions (Lëtzebuenger Chrëschtliche Gewerkschafts-Bond, LCGB), in cooperation with the Belgian ACV/CSC, set up a Committee of Cross-Border Workers which fosters the interests of cross-border workers through lobbying activities in both countries and provides information to employees. It organises initiatives to inform workers, including briefings, leaflets, press releases, posters in companies and publications.</p>
	<p>Jobseekers</p> <p>LCGB provides support and counselling to unemployed people in their search for a new job. This initiative combines direct and personal help to individual jobseekers and contacts with prospective employers.</p>
	<p>Provision of Services</p> <p>Trade union confederations in Luxemburg provide a number of services which are attached to membership, including medical and health plans, advice and help to prepare tax declarations, insurance coverage, the possibility to get scholarships and personal loans.</p>
	<p>Specific groups of workers</p> <p>The trade unions have special departments to foster the interest representation of particular groups of workers, such as women, young people, retired people, migrants and disabled workers.</p>
LV	<p>Collective bargaining</p> <p>In Latvia, the trade unions tend to focus their attention more on collective bargaining than on</p>

	<p>organising as such. Therefore, they mostly consider membership growth as an indirect consequence of interest representation and, more specifically, the mobilisation of workers at times of collective disputes and negotiations on terms and conditions of employment. In certain circumstances, this also includes negotiations on public policies with the government, as it was recently the case in relation to the campaign and referendum for the amendment of the Constitution.</p>
MT	<p>Services and benefits</p> <p>One of the main instruments used by GWU is providing special services to members, including medical and health schemes, and discounts. It also grants members who recruit workers half of the entry fee of the new members.</p>
	<p>Migrant workers</p> <p>GWU plans to launch a national campaign to improve working conditions of migrant and irregular workers which are considered as the victims of widespread exploitation. The trade union cooperates on this initiative with both local associations and NGOs engaged in migrant issues, as well as with the Italian trade union confederation CGIL.</p>
	<p>Promotional campaigns</p> <p>Since 2001, the Union of United Workers (Union Haddiema Maghqudin, UHM) has been organising an annual two-day festival to improve contacts with workers and provide an opportunity to discuss important issues. For the same reason, UHM has started to participate in the Malta Trade Fair.</p>
NL	<p>Self-employed workers</p> <p>In 2007, the Christian Trade Union Federation (Christelijk Nationaal Vakverbond, CNV) has started to organise self-employed workers, following the example of the Dutch Trade Union Federation (Federatie Nederlandse Vakbeweging, FNV) which already opened membership to self-employed persons in 1999, particularly in construction where many foreign workers work as individual subcontractors. The CNV campaign was directed at former trade union members and employees who were cancelling their affiliation because of the transformation of their employment status to self-employment, often as an ‘obliged choice’ following company restructuring. Since there is no collective bargaining yet in place for these workers, the main union focus is on services and notably on the provision of health and disability coverage and pension schemes. This initiative will be the basis for a campaign targeted at all self-employed workers, regardless if they were trade union members previously.</p>
	<p>General campaigns</p> <p>FNV and two affiliated trade unions, the Christian Industrial Union Bedrijvenbond and Abvakabo, have launched the ‘Power to the working people’ campaign in 2008. It included TV and radio advertisements and street posters. The campaign focuses on the services provided by FNV (such as legal advice and tax income services) and on the challenges of a flexible labour market, underlining its position on this issue and the need for regulation to reap the</p>

	benefits and reduce the negative consequences.
	<p>Internet union</p> <p>De Unie, affiliated to the Federation for Managerial and Professional Staff (Vakcentrale voor Middelbaar en Hoger Personeel, MHP), started an initiative to offer membership at a greatly discounted fee (€10 a year) for lower and internet-based services in 2006. This reduced membership fee does not include, for instance, free legal advice in case of individual disputes nor membership of strike funds. The target is especially younger workers who may seek union membership for services. This internet trade union membership provides access to information and assistance on labour issues at a flat rate (€10 a query after the first free question) and services on training and career development at discounted rates. The internet site provides also a forum to discuss workers problems and demands, and the opportunity to make an input to collective bargaining. This initiative (<i>internetvakbond</i>) has developed into an independent association which cooperates with De Unie and participates in collective bargaining, but it also tends to act as a platform for the exchange of free services among workers. For instance, a database of trainee vacancies has been added.</p>
NO	<p>Migrant workers</p> <p>The Norwegian United Federation of Trade Unions (Fellesforbundet) started an initiative targeting migrant workers in the construction sector in response to information that these workers may have sub-standard employment and working conditions. This initiative has mainly involved direct contact with workers at workplaces, but also information on the trade union's website. The trade union confederation acted with the help of translators and also produced documents in Polish and Baltic languages to inform workers of individual and collective rights and about the role of trade unions. Fellesforbundet also organises Norwegian language classes for foreign workers.</p>
	<p>Young people</p> <p>LO organises a special event devoted to young workers, the 'Summer Patrol'. This programme involves visits at workplaces and provides information on employee rights and the role of trade unions to young people employed in summer jobs. An important aim of this programme is to control actual working conditions in summer jobs and to intervene in case of violations.</p>
	<p>Students</p> <p>A number of Norwegian trade unions have started to provide union membership to students in order to involve young people at an early stage and involve high-educated workers. This is done by both professional trade unions, the Federation of Norwegian Professional Associations (Akademikerne) and the Confederation of Unions for Professionals, Norway (Hovedorganisasjonen for universitets- og høyskoleutdannede, Unio), and LO. For LO, it is also important to reach students with part-time jobs. The trade unions carry out campaigns in education organisations, such as universities and colleges, and have 'student organisers'. Fees are usually reduced and include benefits, such as insurance coverage, union magazines and attendance at conferences.</p>

PL	<p>Economic sectors</p> <p>NSZZ Solidarność and KP have developed organising initiatives in the retail sector, especially through direct contacts with workers at workplaces and taking advantage of the fact that shops are open to the public. This was the first large scale initiative to extend membership to the private sector in the late 1990s and was quite successful, in foreign-owned retail chains in particular. However, in recent years the situation has somewhat worsened and a number of company trade unions have ceased activity. At present, the organising efforts remain and the retail sector is one of main unionised areas of the private sector. Other similar initiatives have involved sectors such as security, banking, and hotels and restaurants. The sectors are selected looking at the extent of dissatisfaction with working conditions in the sector.</p>
PT	<p>Specific groups of workers</p> <p>In the 1980s, CGTP created special organisational structures for young people (Interjovem), women, retired workers (Inter-Reformados), migrants, and technical and scientific staff. Migrant workers have become a specific target for recruitment in the late 1990s when a reform law gave the unions an important role in the regularisation of the situation of migrants in Portugal. Both CGTP and UGT launched campaigns to inform migrants about the procedure and organise them. At present, the organisation of migrant workers is a routine element of the trade unions that are active in the economic sectors where most migrants work, such as construction, cleaning, hotels and restaurants, chemicals and metalworking.</p>
RO	<p>Police</p> <p>The 2004 reform law marked the transition of the police to the civil service and therefore established the right to be represented by trade unions. The organising campaign was accompanied by public initiatives, with the participation of other European police trade unions, as well as TV broadcasts and posters in police stations. In 2006, the National Trade Union of Police Officers and Contractual Personnel (Sindicatul Național al Polițiștilor și Personalului Contractual, SNPPC) was established and the first collective agreement was signed in 2007.</p> <p>Survey</p> <p>The Confederation of Free Trade Unions in Romania Brotherhood (Confederația Națională a Sindicatelor Libere din România Frăția, CNSLR Frăția) conducted a survey among union members to collect data on the appreciation of trade union activities and their effectiveness, and direct future strategies.</p>
SE	<p>General campaigns</p> <p>LO launched a campaign on 'higher union membership' (<i>Högre organisationsgrad</i>), which involved all trade unions affiliated to LO and was started after a significant decline in membership of about 7% in 2007. Albeit being a general campaign, it was particularly focused on young people, the capital city of Stockholm, and service and commercial companies. The campaign included the following activities: direct contacts with young people at schools,</p>

	internet-based information, phone services and assistance with longer working hours.
	<p>Professionals</p> <p>The initiative 'Transform the trade union now' (<i>Facket Förändras nu</i>) was started by the Swedish Confederation of Professional Employees (Tjänstemännens Centralorganisation, TCO) and involved all affiliated organisations. The aim is to renew the image of the trade union and underline the importance of collective representation and collective bargaining. The campaign focuses on younger professionals (up to 35 years of age) and on workers on temporary employment contracts. In late 2007, TCO launched both a nation-wide advertisement campaign and a special web site (www.facketförändras.nu) to be used as a forum to discuss the role of trade unions and the expectations towards them. Moreover, specific actions targeting temporary workers were carried out.</p>
	<p>Trade sector</p> <p>Handels started the initiative 'Commercial Employees' Union's drive in large cities' (<i>Handels storstadssatsning</i>). The organising drive was initiated in late 2008 and particularly aimed at young workers in three main cities, notably Stockholm, Gothenburg and Malmö. It included visits at shopping centres in the three cities and the creation of a website devoted to young workers (www.handelscity.se) to provide information and advice, and a forum to discuss issues relevant to their work and workplaces. The campaign also included radio advertisements and granted two-month free membership for new members.</p>
SI	<p>Extend membership in unionised companies</p> <p>In October 2008, SMBr-KNSS started a campaign to increase membership in unionised workplaces by direct contacts with workers, by highlighting that an increased number of members would result in greater resources to invest in activities to represent and protect workers' interests.</p>
	<p>Services and benefits</p> <p>ZSSS introduced a 'Benefit card' (<i>Kartica ugodnosti</i>) in 2006 which grants all members a number of benefits in the form of discounts on shopping and services. The initiative was promoted through the ZSSS website and posters in unionised workplaces. In 2008, ZSSS offered the possibility to include further services and discounts to the card for an additional fee.</p>
	<p>Young people</p> <p>ZSSS, through its sectoral affiliates, seeks to set up Committees for young people (<i>Odbori za mlade</i>) in unionised workplaces as a way to further the involvement of young workers in trade union activities. It also organises an annual event to present the trade union and its activities to students in cooperation with the Student Organization of University of Ljubljana (Študentska Organizacija Univerze v Ljubljani, ŠOU Ljubljana).</p>
	<p>Migrants</p>

	<p>ZSSS started in 2007 an initiative to improve the terms and conditions of employment of migrant workers. The initiative, which was carried out together with the sectoral trade unions, involved contacts at workplaces and personal visits to migrant workers' homes. It also included help to obtain work permits and support equal pay and working conditions with other employees at the same company.</p>
SK	<p>General campaign</p> <p>In 2001, the KOZ SR congress launched the <i>National Programme for Recruiting New Union Members</i>, which was primarily aiming to increase membership in unionised workplaces.</p>
	<p>Services</p> <p>KOZ SR has started an initiative called the Programme of Services to provide selective services to trade union members only.</p>
	<p>Economic sectors</p> <p>The Metal Trade Union Association (Odborový zväz Kovo, OZ KOVO) launched a campaign to increase membership in unionised workplaces, establish new structures in non-union companies and contact young people in secondary vocational and apprenticeship schools. The initiative included the distribution of information on trade union activities and services in workplaces and schools, sometimes responding to workers' request for assistance in non-union companies. The Chemical Trade Union Association (Odborový zväz Chémia, OZ Chémia) has undertaken similar information and awareness-raising initiatives targeting all sectoral workers and young people in particular.</p>
UK	<p>TGWU and Unite</p> <p>Before merging with Amicus to form Unite, TGWU launched a coordinated sectoral approach to organising, rather than focusing on single workplaces. It established a National Organising Strategy in 2004 with 100 dedicated organisers. Moreover, Unite has identified through specific corporate and economic research some areas where to concentrate organising activities. At sectoral level, this has resulted in the unionisation of thousands of migrant workers in the white meat processing industry, or in the high profile 'Justice for Cleaners' campaign which scored important successes throughout central London.</p>
	<p>GMB</p> <p>GMB has put considerable efforts in mainstreaming organising within day-to-day activities of all activists, rather than having a group of specialist organisers. GMB requires that all activists report on their organising work and sets a number of specific objectives, which are then used to assess performance. National organising targets are developed into a strategic plan by the central organising department.</p>
	<p>Usdaw</p> <p>Usdaw has started a programme to train lay activists to carry out organising activities in their respective workplaces. This initiative is based on a six-month organising training programme</p>

	accessible to lay workplace activists, which is done in partnership with employers with whom Usdaw has good recognition rights. During the six-month programme, the union pays the employer the equivalent of the wage of lay activists, who are then expected to go back to their job and with a key focus on recruiting and identifying activists, and selecting issues which are relevant for workers in that workplace.
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Source: European Industrial Relations Observatory (EIRO)

Table A2: Country codes

Country code	Country name
AT	Austria
BE	Belgium
CY	Cyprus
DE	Germany
DK	Denmark
EL	Greece
ES	Spain
FI	Finland
FR	France
HU	Hungary
IE	Ireland
IT	Italy
LT	Lithuania
LU	Luxembourg
LV	Latvia
MT	Malta
NL	Netherlands
NO	Norway
PL	Poland

RO	Romania
SI	Slovenia
SK	Slovakia
UK	United Kingdom

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