Which way towards a Europeanisation of trade union strategies? Institutional logics and trade union officers’ views

Vera Glassner and Kurt Vandaele

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Aim and research questions

- **External** challenges for unions strategies and identities require effective **transnational** union policies but unions are **nationally** enrooted

- Unions’ **internal** search for reconsidering strategies in EU: a tension between Europeanisation and (re-)nationalisation of resolving the challenges (Erne 2008; Upchurch et al. 2009)

- Union strategic choices are likely guided by their identity (Hyman 2001) and influenced by internal forces

- **Aim:** preferences of union officials towards (future) union strategies at the **European level**
  - Survey among **national** policy officers involved in European or international affairs (i.e. attending and participating meetings of an **ETUF**)

- **Research questions**
  - Do the respondents have preferences for (types of) Europeanisation, or a (re-)nationalisation and do they differ across the EU?
  - Which factors can explain possible differences in preferences?
Strategic choices for transnational union policies (Erne 2008)

Top-down process

I: technocratic re-nationalisation

II: democratic re-nationalisation

Bottom-up process

III: technocratic Europeanisation
- Often particularistic sector-specific interests
- European Social Dialogue; lobbying

IV: democratic Europeanisation
- Transnational interests
- Informal (institutionalised) structures (but also formal tools like EWCs); NGOs

Which way towards a Europeanisation of trade union strategies?
Explaining differences in union officers’ view

- National ‘institutional logics’ in industrial relations and collective bargaining institutions particularly, which have been relatively stable over time (cf. Crouch 1993), can explain respondents’ preference for transnational strategies and their form.

- Institutional logics in national industrial relations differ along a continuum of the logic of membership and logic of influence:
  - Use of power resources at the national level
    - Organisational power: membership strength, mobilisation and participation of the rank-and-file ► logic of membership
    - Institutional power: industrial relations institutions and state agencies ► logic of influence
  - Logic of membership and logic of influence and degree of conflict between those logics shape cultural beliefs and attitudes, practices and behaviour of unions and respondents.

- Not only nationally diverging institutional logics at national level but also past experiences and common practices at the transnational level will likely influence respondents’ preferences.
### Types of IR regimes and predominant institutional logics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Logic of membership</th>
<th>Logic of influence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Low</strong></td>
<td><strong>High</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Low</strong></td>
<td>Most CEE-countries: low union density; low bargaining coverage; bargaining at company level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>High</strong></td>
<td>Liberal-western Europe: medium to low union density; low bargaining coverage; bargaining at company level; more ad-hoc an issue-specific role of the state</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Hypotheses

| H1 | Respondents from Nordic Europe will generally favour a re-nationalisation strategy over an Europeanisation strategy due to their limited experience with making use of EU-level (institutional) resources (negative framing) |
| H2 | Respondents from Liberal-western and Southern Europe will generally reject a re-nationalisation strategy given their limited national institutional power resources (positive framing) |
| H3 | Respondents from central-west Europe will generally favour an Europeanisation strategy given their past experience with making use of EU-level (institutional) resources (positive framing) |
| H4 | Respondents will generally favour a more technocratic Europeanisation since this institutional logic is predominating in most national IR systems |
Method and survey sample

- Questionnaire survey carried out among national union officers attending and participating in meetings of ETUF (Sep 2010-Feb 2011)
  - 36 meetings = 419 questionnaire returns
  - No thorough indication of response rate but overt support of ETUF
  - Representativeness influenced by nature of meetings: agenda and attendance composition?
  - Respondents = majority full-time paid union officers
  - Respondents might be more positively inclined towards European integration issues than the unions’ rank-and-file

- Survey results *de facto* represent opinions and views of respondents in western European countries
  - Survey analysis based on EU17: 91.0% (n=353) of survey sample
  - Excluded CEE-countries (n=13) and non EU-members (n=22)
  - Country unknown: n=33
Characteristics of respondents

- 76.5% (n=270) of the respondents are a member of the Eurozone, whereas the countries of 83 respondents have not introduced yet the Euro currency.

- Gender: 37.6% (n=129) of the respondents are women

- Average experience is 6.3 years (n=344) with 2 subsamples
  - low seniority: <5y (n=170)
  - high seniority: =>5y (n=161)

- Single-sector analysis

- Regional division: liberal-western Europe: 11.5% (n=42); central-western Europe: 30.9% (n=113), northern Europe: 17.5% (n=64); southern Europe: 36.6% (n=134)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Collective bargaining on pay and working conditions should entirely remain a responsibility of national states</th>
<th>(Strongly) Disagree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>(Strongly) Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nordic Europe (n=63)</td>
<td>22.2%</td>
<td>14.3%</td>
<td>63.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central-western Europe (n=112)</td>
<td>26.8%</td>
<td>17.9%</td>
<td>55.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seniority ≥5 years (n=159)</td>
<td>34.0%</td>
<td>15.7%</td>
<td>50.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal-western Europe (n=42)</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
<td>50.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seniority &lt;5 years (n=168)</td>
<td>36.9%</td>
<td>13.7%</td>
<td>49.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern Europe (n=131)</td>
<td>46.6%</td>
<td>13.0%</td>
<td>40.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>All respondents (n=348)</strong></td>
<td><strong>34.2%</strong></td>
<td><strong>15.2%</strong></td>
<td><strong>50.6%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Technocratic Europeanisation: general overview

- The ETUF should promote negotiating transnational (multi-)sectoral collective agreements (n=342) - 66.70%
- European sectoral minimum wages should be introduced (n=352) - 73.80%
- The ETUF should promote negotiating transnational company agreements (n=340) - 77.90%
- The European Commission should set common employment goals (n=349) - 86.20%
- The ETUF should promote the strengthening of the European sectoral social dialogue (n=346) - 91.40%
- Unions should put more efforts in promoting the European sectoral social dialogue (n=350) - 92.00%
- European sectoral minimum regulations on working conditions should be introduced (n=352) - 93.00%
Democratic Europeanisation: general overview

The ETUF's capacity for action could be strengthened by increasing membership through organising campaigns (n=338)

- 78.10%

The ETUF should support cross-border organising campaigns in multinational companies (n=344)

- 80.50%

Unions should put more efforts in promoting the cross-border coordinating of collective bargaining (n=352)

- 82.40%

A European legal framework on guaranteeing the right to take cross-border industrial action should be introduced (n=350)

- 87.10%

Strengthening cross-border solidarity and (industrial) action is important for my union members (n=351)

- 88.00%

Receiving information on trade union actions of subsidiaries of the company in other countries is important for my union members (n=345)

- 89.90%

Receiving information on pay and working conditions of subsidiaries of the company in other countries is important for my union members (n=348)

- 89.90%
What kind of Europeanisation strategy?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Technocratic Europeanisation</th>
<th>Democratic Europeanisation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Southern Europe</td>
<td>4.2 (n=125)</td>
<td>4.3 (n=127)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal-western Europe**</td>
<td>4.1 (n=39)</td>
<td>4.3 (n=40)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High seniority (≥ 5 years)****</td>
<td>4.1 (n=152)</td>
<td>4.3 (n=151)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rejecting re-nationalisation</td>
<td>4.2 (n=114)</td>
<td>4.3 (n=112)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central-western Europe**</td>
<td>4.1 (n=105)</td>
<td>4.2 (n=101)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low seniority (&lt; 5 years)</td>
<td>4.1 (n=158)</td>
<td>4.1 (n=160)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Favouring re-nationalisation****</td>
<td>3.9 (n=162)</td>
<td>4.1 (n=164)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nordic Europe**</td>
<td>3.6 (n=58)</td>
<td>3.8 (n=56)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>All respondents</strong>**</td>
<td><strong>4.1 (n=327)</strong></td>
<td><strong>4.2 (n=324)</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Conclusions

- Predictive power of institutional logics for explaining respondents’ opinions is rather low except for Nordic exceptionalism and seniority
  - One third (Liberal-Western Europe) to almost half (Southern-Europe) are rejecting a renationalisation strategy
  - More than half of the respondents in central-western Europe are in favour of a renationalisation strategy (negative framing)
  - **Significantly stronger agreement on democratic Europeanisation instead of predicted preference for technocratic Europeanisation**

- Average scores on items are high and point to the same direction; thus only gradual differences between respondents

- Ambiguity of Erne’s interpretative framework (in a quantitative research design)
  - Complexity of the multi-level system of European industrial relations reduces the clear-cut delineation of Euro-technocratic and Euro-democratic approaches
  - Transnational institutions can change over time so that they move from one type of Europeanisation to another (cf. e.g. EWCs)

- Further research will be based on a more inductive approach
  - (1) on factor analysis for detecting different union Europeanisation strategies instead of a simple dichotomy between democratic or technocrat Europeanisation
  - (2) cluster analysis for attributing each country to different Europeanisation strategies
Conclusions (2)

- **National unions**
  - Reinforcing efforts in **cross-border information exchange**, coordination and cooperation in collective bargaining, including exchange of policy officers, **mobilisation** and **organizing campaigns**
  - Promoting ‘**best practice**’ of transnational union action
  - Improving cooperation within **European institutions**, e.g. ETUFs and EWCs

- **ETUF(s)**
  - Strengthening **cross-border coordination of CB** → regular and continuous practice (‘peer pressure’, common norms and values)
  - Embark on policy approached targeted at **members**, e.g. transnational mobilisation and organizing campaigns
  - Establishing common approach towards **EWC** policies and support (e.g. in restructuring).

- **ETUC**
  - Stronger focus on **membership-based policy approaches** to reduce internal ‘democratic deficit’, discontent and EU scepticism
  - Use **Euro-technocratic** strategies to strengthen **cross-border solidarity and action**, e.g. lobbying for common legal frame for transnational industrial action.
How important are institutional logics?

- Important obstacles for building-up transnational solidarity
  - Diversity of labour market regulations, policies and outcomes
  - Unions giving priority to national interests instead of the interests of all unions involved
  - Differences in union identity, culture and traditions
  - Differences in industrial relations systems

- Less important
  - Employers undermining trade union cross-border solidarity in general
  - Employers hindering trade union representation in the company
  - Low interest among union members
  - Differences in financial resources among unions and in membership rates

- High seniority: diversity of labour market regulations, policies and outcomes

- Low seniority: unions given priority to national interests of the interests of all unions involved
Technocratic Europeanisation: regional differences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>European sectoral minimum wages should be introduced****</th>
<th>(Strongly) disagree</th>
<th>Neither agree, nor disagree</th>
<th>(Strongly) agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Central-western Europe (n=112)</td>
<td>8.9%</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
<td>86.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern Europe (n=134)</td>
<td>10.5%</td>
<td>7.5%</td>
<td>82.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal-western Europe (n=42)</td>
<td>19.1%</td>
<td>7.1%</td>
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</table>