

EDITORIAL

Sectoral social dialogue was until recently very much overshadowed in the research world by its inter-professional counterpart. This lack of interest is all the more surprising when considering that core collective negotiations in many Member States actually take place at sectoral level. This academic imbalance has started to rectify itself, with more and more quantitative and qualitative research that deals with the nature, outputs and the potential of negotiations between EU-level sectoral social partners. This edition of Transfer aims to consolidate thinking on the sectoral social dialogue, by bringing together quantitative and qualitative research on the process, products and impacts of this nascent form of European industrial relations. Eight years after the Commission's Communication that allowed for the establishment of formal sectoral social dialogue committees, various authors evaluate developments to date.

To give the issue a sound factual foundation, Philippe Pochet presents a quantitative analysis of 31 sectoral social dialogue committees established since 1998, and the 353 agreements adopted by sectoral social partners since the late 1970s. He thus evaluates EU-level sectoral negotiations over time and the qualitative changes in agreements. In order to enter deeper into the experiences of certain sectors, a number of sectoral reports present qualitative perceptions of the sectoral social dialogue. A diverse selection of sectors ranging from the manufacturing heartland of industrial relations (e.g. shipbuilding, chemicals) to the different strands of the service economy (e.g. commerce, finance, private security) and public services are presented. From this mass of information and data, Otto Jacobi and Judith Kirton-Darling aim to draw some common trends and tendencies, as well as highlight some of the challenges. Berndt Keller provides counterweight by giving an overall critique of the developments and the potential of sectoral social dialogue.

Moreover, several authors go beyond an introspective view of the sectoral social dialogue to discuss its interaction with other processes and actors, including the interprofessional social dialogue and European Employment Strategy, the coordination of sectoral collective bargaining strategies, relations with civil society and the link with emerging forms of local 'societal' dialogue. Janine Goetschy ties the European sectoral social dialogue into the web of institutional and political dialogues at European level on macroeconomic, social and employment affairs. Franz Traxler and Paul Marginson focus on the evolution of sectoral collective bargaining strategies throughout the EU, especially in the light of the recent enlargement, and the future of the union-driven sectoral coordination.

Looking beyond 'traditional' sectoral industrial relations, Eberhard Schmidt concentrates on the increasing frequency of the emergence of broader coalitions between trade unions and other civil society actors, such as non-governmental organisations (NGOs). He analyses how these forms of coalition building and networking have emerged on specific sectoral issues or campaigns, particularly on international concerns, and the implications for trade union strategies and collective bargaining. Coming down from international or transnational concerns, Jean-Yves Boulin and Ulrich Mückenberger focus on the emerging trends towards local level or territorial 'societal' dialogue on issues traditionally reserved for collective bargaining, which cause a tension between different levels of social dialogue. This trend, the authors assert, is intrinsically linked with regional economic and industrial restructuring and delocalisation, with a variety of local actors (including the social partners) coming together to find ways of maintaining employment and economic growth in their particular regions/areas.

Together these articles provide a stimulating and innovative overview of the development of sectoral social dialogue. They identify the challenges and opportunities faced by trade unions in making it a fully functioning process providing fruit for workers in Europe.

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