

# Union Organising in Poland in the Regional Context of CEE<sup>1</sup>

Jan Czarzasty\*

Adam Mrozowicki\*\*

## Abstract

*Trade union organising has been one of the central strategies of trade union revitalisation in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE). The Anglo-American model of organising was transferred to the region in the 1990s. Poland was the first CEE country in which the organising approach was implemented by NSZZ 'Solidarność', then variety of trade unions followed. Organising has not brought about sustainable membership growth in the Polish trade unions even if it contributed to a number of qualitative changes, including the unionisation of multinational companies. Among the key challenges to further trade union membership growth, the paper points to a rapid increase of precarious employment in Poland. It is suggested that due to peculiarities of labour market and legal contexts that constrain union organising of precarious workers, trade unions need to seek for possible coalitions with the emergent employee associations, community groups and social movements. As the environment transforms, trade unions need to re-evaluate their strategic goals, organisational structures and mode of operation, which have remained unchanged over the years, and are barely adequate to the current demands, challenges and opportunities.*

**Keywords:** trade unions, union organising, Poland, Central and Eastern Europe

---

<sup>1</sup> This paper is based on the publication *Union organising in Poland and in the CEE: experiences, trends, alternatives* prepared for and published by the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung in 2014.

\*Warsaw School of Economics; jczarzasty@sgh.waw.pl

\*\* University of Wrocław; adam.mrozowicki@wms.uni.wroc.pl

## Introduction

It seems obvious that trade unions have to put some efforts to recruit new members and mobilise the current ones in order to survive. Yet, the idea of trade union organising is still a relatively new concept in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE). The CEE labour movements were not only affected by painful neoliberal reforms which undermined their traditional constituency but they also had to overcome the legacy of semi-mechanical union membership in state socialism. In early 1990s the organising approaches ‘travelled’ to Poland through international contacts between the Service Employee International Unions (SEIU) and NSZZ ‘Solidarność’. It took some time to diffuse the ideas in the region, mostly thanks to international union projects and contacts. Yet, in the second decade of 2000s, most of trade unions in CEE had some experiences with membership recruitment. Trade union organising proved to be a strenuous, financial and human resource-intensive task which often encountered legislative, structural, cultural and organisational barriers and so far has produced quite limited quantitative effects in terms of membership growth (Czarzasty, Mrozowicki 2014). Among the reasons for relatively limited results of organising, both the problems internal to trade union movements and external to them (including the expansion of unstable and precarious employment) can be mentioned. A decade of experiments with organising in CEE seems to be a long enough time to allow stating several potentially ‘difficult’ questions. Was trade union organising ‘worth’ the investment some CEE trade unions made? What can trade unions learn from their efforts to counteract membership decline so far? Is the ‘organising’ model of trade unionism at all an adequate solution for the problems the CEE trade unions face?

This article aims at addressing the abovementioned questions by looking closer at trade union organising efforts in Poland. The empirical reference are our earlier research (Czarzasty 2010; Gardawski, Mrozowicki, Czarzasty 2012; Czarzasty, Gajewska, Mrozowicki 2014; Mrozowicki 2014a), the existing studies on trade union organising in CEE and experiences from two international workshops sponsored by the Friedrich Ebert Foundation in 2013<sup>2</sup>. Taking as a case example Poland to which the Anglo-Saxon organising methods were transferred first in the region we seek

---

<sup>2</sup> The two international conferences mentioned were: ‘Organising unorganised’ (Warsaw School of Economics, 9–10 October 2013) and ‘Contemporary trade union representation of workers in CEE:

to understand the conditions, forms and outcomes of trade union revitalisation in Central and Eastern Europe. The article is structured as follows. In the next section, we present a comparative context by discussing selected trade union organising experiences in the UK, USA and selected Eastern European countries. Subsequently, we look closer at the case of Poland and discuss the ways of organising members in NSZZ 'Solidarność', Confederation of Labour and some radical trade unions. In the final part, we explore the issue of precarious work and 'junk contracts' as one of the central challenges to union membership growth in Poland and other CEE countries.

## Varieties of Trade Union Organising: Comparative Perspectives

It is a common observation in the industrial relations literature in developed countries that trade unions had been in decline since the 1980s. This trend is usually considered a result of neoliberal economic changes, such as privatisation, the liberalisation of public services, increasing global competition and relocation of industries, the changing structures and flexibilisation of employment, as well as greater individualisation of worker strategies. The crisis of trade unionism is reflected in membership loss, declining effectiveness in terms of collective bargaining coverage, the problems of interest definition as a result of increasing membership heterogeneity, declining mobilizing capacity and more constrained opportunity structure. Trade union responses aimed at halting and reversing these tendencies are usually termed trade union renewal or revitalisation strategies. The latter can be defined as a set of trade union practices aimed at counteracting the loss of their bargaining power and their political influence, the decrease in trade union density and the erosion of their organisational capacity to adjust to new contexts (Behrens, Hamann, Hurd 2004).

Trade union organising has been the central strategy of trade union revitalisation in the last 20 years in various national contexts worldwide. Increasing union membership in terms of numbers and diversity is an important tool of union revitalisation as it affects labour's capacities to collectively mobilise, bargain and negotiate with employers from a position of power and authority. Yet, what is meant by organising is understood in different ways in various national contexts (Bernaciak,

---

barriers, opportunities and challenges' (Institute of Sociology, University of Wrocław, 11–12 October 2013). The book (in Polish) which emerged out of these workshops is: Czarzasty, Mrozowicki (2014).

Gumbrell-McCormick, Hyman 2014). In its narrow sense, it refers to recruiting new union members. More broadly and accurately, however, as noted by Simms, Holgate and Herry (2012: 7), organising can be defined as an approach to union building putting emphasis on workers empowerment and self-organisation at the workplace level. In this article, we make use of organising concept in its both meanings.

Similarly to organising, the very term ‘trade union revitalisation’ might be troublesome in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) because the idealised ‘golden era’ of trade unionism was not present there in the past. Following Behrens, Hamann and Hurd (2004: 21–22), we propose to understand trade union revitalisation in a generic sense as the reflection of union efforts to increase their power in four dimensions. First, there is the membership dimension which refers to increase in membership numbers, density and a change in the composition of union membership to reflect diverse workforce (women, youth, minorities, service sector workers and others). Second, there is the economic dimension concerning union collective bargaining power and their impact on the distribution of wealth. Third dimension is the political one. It is linked with improving the effectiveness of union attempts to influence the policy-making process, including legislative changes. Finally, there is the institutional dimension referring to union organisation structure, resources and their capacity to adjust to the changes in the sphere of employment.

Depending on legislative framework, structural and economic contexts and union leadership innovativeness, trade unions tend to engage in different kinds of tactics and strategies to increase their influence. Thus, in the countries with the developed system of national, regional and sectoral levels collective bargaining and developed channels of union influence on policy-making, trade unions are less likely to invest in trade union organising. Conversely, institutional factors supporting greater focus on membership development and engagement include decentralised collective bargaining, the limited political influence of unions and, most importantly, direct dependence of union bargaining power on their membership size and diversity (Heery, Adler 2004). Traditionally, the former type of countries included the coordinated market economies, such as Germany, and the latter group contained the liberal economies such as the USA or the UK. In the majority of CEE countries, institutional conditions of organising are also met as trade unions have limited influence on policy-making, corporatist institutions are underdeveloped and their strength depends mostly on membership numbers and mobilising capacities (Mrozowicki 2014a).

However, the role of institutional context for union organising is not deterministic. On the one hand, we could observe the shift towards organising also in the countries

such as Germany, Netherlands or Denmark as unions institutional power has been weakened. On the other hand, the post-socialist trade unions in CEE lacked resources and tools to effectively seek for new members at the beginning of transformation. The role of trade union strategic choices in defining membership recruitment and mobilisation as one of their central priorities has been also central in the USA, Australia and the UK, in which organising approach was developed in the 1980s and 1990s.

### **The Anglo-Saxon Experiences and Models of Organising**

Inspired by the experiences of social movement unionism in the Global South, the concept of *organising model* emerged in the late 1980s in the USA to denote, firstly, internal organising to mobilise trade union members and, secondly, external organising which promotes grassroots activism as a way to get support for union representation (Hurd 2004). Next, the approach was transferred to other national contexts, including the UK, Australia, Canada, as well as many European countries, Eastern Europe included. There are some differences in the way of adopting the organising model between and within these various countries, of which the most important seems to be relevance of broader political agenda related to workers' empowerment and self-organisation.

In the USA context, aggressive, grassroots campaigns focusing on the issues of justice, fairness and antidiscrimination proved to be successful at least in the initial phase of organising wave in the USA. An important role in the campaigns such as the SEIU *Justice for Janitors* (dating back to the mid 1980s and aimed at organising low paid caretakers and cleaners in the USA and Canada) was played by the cooperation of trade unions and social movement activists. SEIU was initially inspired by the experiences of anarchosyndicalist Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), with its focus on worker collective action at the workplace level and the rejection of the idea of the paid union staff core responsibility for collective bargaining (Simms, Holgate, Heery 2012: 40). In 1989 AFL-CIO formed the Organising Institute to train union organisers. In 1996, John Sweeney, the former SEIU leader, was elected the AFL-CIO president with an explicit goal of pushing the organising model at the top of the confederation's agenda. The goal was to shift 30% of union resources to recruitment and (since 2000) to organise 1 000 000 workers a year (Hurd 2004). Both targets have

never been met by all AFL-CIO affiliates, even though some, including SEIU or United Brotherhood of Carpenters devoted up to 50% of their budgets to organising.

In the UK, the Organising Academy was established by the Trades Union Congress (TUC) in 1998 to train union organisers, officers and lay union activists. It was directly inspired by the American, Canadian and Australian trade union experiences gained by the UK unionists during a series of visits held in 1996 and 1997 (Simms, Holgate, Heery 2012: 37). Between 1998 and 2008, 270 organisers enrolled in the Academy had recruited around 50 000 new members and 4 500 new union activists during their training (Gall 2009: 3). Yet, the TUC had no single membership recruitment strategy for its affiliates. In this respect, Simms, Holgate and Heery (2012: 59–89) demonstrate important differences among three large UK trade unions, UNITE, GMB and Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers (USDAW).

The UNITE approach followed the path of specialisation of organisers roles. It moved beyond organising individual workplaces and invested in organising important unorganised sectors, such as low-cost airlines, meat processing industry and janitorial work in business districts in London. Crucial to this approach was a strong network of trained workplace activists who are regionally clustered to support each other. The GMB rejected the idea of employing specialist organisers and integrated organising work into the roles of all union officers. While the union coordinates important organising targets at the national level, these are regional officers who decide on how to implement them. An important emphasis is placed on monitoring the extent to which targets were reached. The USDAW which is active in particular in retail sector combines organising and a partnership with employers. It makes use of the 'induction' phase of employees to recruit them by intensively trained union recruiters operating at the workplace level. In the context of Poland, NSZZ 'Solidarność' approach in large retail chains was also inspired by some elements adopted by the USDAW.

The UK and the US trade union experiences demonstrate a variety of approaches to union organising. The most common distinction in the debates on the organising model is the one differentiating between the servicing model of unions and the organising model of unionism (Fairbrother, Yates 2003: 18–19). In the case of servicing model, trade unions are defined as organisations whose main goal is to provide services to their members, including professional representation in the case of grievances at work, legal support, assistance in the case of unemployment and, in some countries, management of pension and social security funds. Trade union paid staff and full time officials are central as they manage problems at work through specialised labour-management institutions. Contrastingly, in the organising model

union members are active participants of labour relations. They are trained to take responsibility for solving their individual and collective problems at work and exert pressure on employers through workplace activism. The role of paid union staff is to support this grassroots dynamics.

Another distinction can be made between radical and managed approaches to trade union organising (Simms, Holgate, Heery 2012). The radical approaches are based on the political agenda centred on workers' empowerment, self-organisation and grassroots activism. They are aimed at pursuing broader political goals, including the transformation of the relationship between the capital and labour. Workplace conflicts are seen as inherent to the relationships of domination and subordination in a broader society. Thus, the area of organising activity is expanded beyond workplaces to local communities and social movements. As noted by Simms, Holgate and Heery (2012), this idea was originally present in the anarchosyndicalist Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) agenda. Conversely, managed approaches see trade union organising in terms of 'tool box' consisting of politically neutral tactics which can be taught and transferred to professional union organisers and workplace activists. It is based on paid union staff, centralised organising campaigns and intensive resource transfer from servicing the existing members to organising new ones.

It is the matter of ongoing dispute in the industrial relations literature which approach to organising can be considered the most successful. Most of researchers note that the strategic choices of unions depend on the context and therefore there is no one-fits-all solution. For instance, membership retention often requires providing services to the existing members who tend to complain if too much resources are shifted to organising. Research has also showed successful organising campaigns usually required some level of central coordination. In this context, Simms, Holgate and Heery (2012: 31) refer to the notion of 'managed activism' which links central coordination with membership empowerment and 'grassroots' mobilisation. It remains an open question to which extent the notion of managed activism can also be applied to describe trade union organising in CEE.

## The Experiences With Trade Union Organising in Central and Eastern Europe

Even though there is no CEE country in which trade union density increased as compared to the late 1980s (Pedersini 2010), the active union efforts to retain and acquire new members remained relatively rare in the 1990s. Firstly, the legacy of passive trade union organisations with quasi-obligatory membership made union organising skills rather rare among CEE unionists except for some grassroots, anti-communist unions such as ‘Solidarność’ in Poland. Secondly, CEE trade unions lost a vast part of their resources that could have been shifted to organising as a result of neoliberal restructuring and privatisation which caused sharp membership erosion. Third, decentralised organisational structures of the CEE trade unions in which the majority (60–90%) of union dues stay at the company level made investments in membership recruitment difficult.

The erosion of union membership in the 1990s made CEE trade unions to change their approaches in the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century and more actively search for new members. The existing studies (e.g. Czarzasty, Gajewska, Mrozowski 2014; Krzywdziński 2010; Mrozowski 2014a; Ost 2009) explain this qualitative change by generational turnover and opening for organisational innovation among younger cohorts of union leaders, increasing grassroots pressure of unorganised workers, international cooperation and the transfer of ideas and resources for organising from abroad, as well as support of European Union funds and various other foundations (Friedrich Ebert Foundation including) for union building. Previous research made it clear that trade union attempts to recruit new members are multifaceted involving direct recruitment in selected sectors, information campaigns, leadership and activists’ training, protest based organising and service guarantees restricted to union members (Czarzasty, Gajewska, Mrozowski 2014; Pedersini 2010). The shared feature of organising efforts across the CEE countries is the role played by international trade union exchange, contacts and sometimes direct resource transfer in the course of joint East-West projects. Except for some radical unions (mostly in Poland), a limited role is played by the cooperation of labour movements with other social movements; the latter being a clear difference as compared for instance to the USA (Mrozowski, Antoniewicz 2014).

The research carried out in the automotive and retail sectors in Estonia, Poland, Romania and Slovenia in 2009–2012 (Mrozowski 2014a) made it possible to note several other features of the CEE varieties of organising. Firstly, the majority of



newly established union organisations tend to emerge as a result of grassroots worker mobilisation rather than centralised union organising campaigns. The activities of new unions whose activities are primarily driven by attempts to solve basic problems at work rather than broader political goals and the role of union federations and confederations is limited to support of these bottom-up activities. Secondly, in some sectors (such as retail or security), there is a growing relevance of more professionalised and centralised membership recruitment usually resulting from joint, international union projects and circulation of ideas. It is manifested in the employment of union organisers, the emergence of new organising units within union structures and the shift of some part of union budget for organising.

Besides NSZZ ‘Solidarność’ in Poland, which over time developed rather comprehensive, US-inspired approach to trade union organising discussed in the next section (Czarzasty 2010; Krzywdzinski 2010), one of the less known cases of trade union organising in CEE is the Baltic Organising Academy project carried out by Nordic, Estonian and Lithuanian trade unions in Estonia and Lithuania (Häkkinen 2013). It started in 2010 with the focus on industrial, services and transportation sectors. In 2013, there were 32 different organisations involved. As noted by Häkkinen (2013), the first success of the BOA was to acquire commitment to the project by all parties involved. The next one was pulling together resources; for instance, Nordic Unions have contributed 5000–15000 EUR each, while the Baltic unions are committed to invest ‘at least 35 per cent of the campaign-generated membership fees into organising work’ (ibidem: 7). Estonians managed to employ 5 organisers and Lithuanians – 1 person. In each sector, organisers focus on few strategic companies. Up to date (July 2014), since the beginning of the fieldwork phase in 2012 the BOA managed to organise 1213 new employees, of which majority in Estonia (with 11 new workplace union organisations). Notably, in spring 2013, the BOA decided to hire a Polish coach (from NSZZ ‘Solidarność’) to train campaign leaders in Estonia and Lithuania.

Is there anything we could learn from trade union organising experiences in Anglo-Saxon countries and in Central and Eastern Europe? Some of the existing debates have been already touched upon, including servicing *versus* organising dichotomy or the problems inherent to the centralisation of membership recruitment within trade unions. According to some authors (Gall 2009, Simms et al. 2012), the expansion of managerial strategies to acquire new union members in the UK reduced organising to a set of practices and tactics rather than as a wider political initiative (Simms, Holgate 2010: 158). In other words, the ‘travel’ of organising model across the globe, Eastern Europe included, was accompanied by its depoliticisation. The real politics of union organising requires to rethink the connections among all

four (membership, economic, political and institutional) dimensions of trade union power. It is clear that unions cannot do without new members, but they need also to engage in collective bargaining at all levels, secure workers rights and benefits at the political level and change their structures to promote internal democracy and adequate representation of all categories of workers. It is in this critical context that we explore the organising approaches of the Polish trade unions.

### **Trade Union Organising in Central and Eastern Europe: the Case of Poland**

For several reasons, Poland represents both unique and the flagship case to explore the experiences of trade union organising in Central and Eastern Europe. Firstly, Poland was the first socialist country in which independent, self-organised trade union, NSZZ ‘Solidarność’, emerged before 1989. Secondly, it was the first country in the region in which trade unions began to experiment with the American approaches to union organising due to early contacts between NSZZ ‘Solidarność’ and SEIU in early 1990s (Czarzasty, Gajewska, Mrozowski 2014). Finally, it is also one of few (if not the only one case) in CEE in which the full spectrum of organising strategies can be observed, including managerial ones, grassroots and based on the coalition-building with social movements (radical political unionism).

Since early 1990s the unionisation level in Poland has been sharply falling down (Wenzel 2009) to eventually stabilise at a low level of 10 to 15%<sup>3</sup>. There are various, parallel arguments presented to explain the dynamics of union membership. The key arguments can be divided into: cultural (pertaining to post-communist legacy), institutional and structural (institutional environment of trade unions and their organisational structures, as well as structure of economy and labour market) and strategic (referring to unions’ responses to de-unionisation) (see: Czarzasty, Gajewska, Mrozowski 2014).

---

<sup>3</sup> Measuring unionisation level in Poland is difficult due to lack of official, administrative data on the subject. The only longitudinal data series available are provided by the Public Opinion Research Centre (Centrum Badań Opinii Społecznej, CBOS) which has been running survey studies on representative samples of adult Poles on annual basis. The statistical error of +/- 3% applies.

**Table 1. Trade union density in Poland (%): survey data**

Year	1987	1991	2000	2002	2007	2008	2010	2013	2014
Trade union density	38	28	20	18	14	16	15	10	12

Source: Wenzel (2009: 540) based on the Public Opinion Research Centre (CBOS) Report. Data on 2002, 2007, 2010, 2013 and 2014 based on the reports of CBOS no. BS/55/2003; BS/21/2008, BS/109/2010, BS/62/2013, 106/2014

The national system of industrial relations poses some serious barriers to trade union organising, and more broadly speaking, to union development. First category of barriers stem from the **legal environment** which determines the model of union movement in Poland as enterprise-level-centred and effectively excludes certain, sizeable categories of people in employment from union membership (self-employed, persons in non-standard employment). Barriers of the second type are related to the **structure of employment** in national economy. Small enterprises (with less than 10 employees) dominate: they constitute 96% of all economic entities and employ around 40% of the workforce. In practice, such companies are a terrain unreachable to trade unions.

Third type of barriers regards the **low incentives offered by unions** to their potential members: Poland is a non-Ghent country<sup>4</sup>, thus services provided by unions are modest, and the extent of collective bargaining is very limited, and virtually non-existent at the sector-level, while in ‘the context of organizing, unions are typically seeking two related objectives; securing collective bargaining gains at the level of the individual workplace and securing bargaining gains across a sector or subsector of the economy’ (Simms, Holgate, Heery 2012: 155). However, the latter is counterbalanced by the observation that decentralised and conflict-oriented collective bargaining systems and low bargaining coverage are factors encouraging organising activities in Poland (Krzywdzinski 2010: 290). In other words, in the event of no collective agreement present, the very existence of the unions works helps the cause of employee interest articulation.

<sup>4</sup> A Ghent system can be defined as state-subsidised, but voluntary unemployment insurance administered by trade unions. Such union-run unemployment funds were first established in the Belgian city of Ghent in 1901 (Vandaele 2006). Nowadays, Ghent system persists in Scandinavian countries (except Norway) and in its homeland, Belgium, albeit in a modified form.

## International Cooperation and the Transfer of Organising Models

For historical reasons, CEE trade unions lacked the internal resources which supported organizing in the Anglo-Saxon countries (Mrozowicki 2014a: 5), thus the original impulse would have to come from the West. Poland was the first country in the Central and Eastern Europe where organising model was adopted. The ground for implementing revitalisation strategies was cultivated from the early 1990s onwards by European partners such as FES through their conferences, training seminars and networking activities. Nevertheless, the concept of union organising arrived from the USA via the SEIU, which shared their experiences in recruitment and expansion in the service sector with NSZZ ‘Solidarność’ as early as in 1993 (Gardawski 2001).

In the early 1990s NSZZ ‘Solidarność’ was the only national-level union in Poland, and one of the very few (aside from Bulgarian Podkrepa or Hungary’s Liga, yet being definitely the largest of such) in the former Eastern Bloc with extensive international contacts. Collaboration with SEIU resulted in formation of an organising task-force, which transformed into the Union Development Office (Dział Rozwoju Związku, DRZ) in 1998. The same year the first organising campaign in the CEE commenced with establishment of the enterprise-level ‘Solidarność’ union in a hypermarket in Szczecin (Czarzasty 2010).

Thus, it was the American organising model, which was transposed to Poland initially. Other foreign-influenced initiatives followed. In particular, German unions became involved in supporting union-establishment activities in the German-owned subsidiaries in the automotive sector (Ost 2009, Mrozowicki 2014a). The original ‘Solidarność’ model of organising also evolved, falling under influence of European trade unions, especially from the retail sector in the UK (USDAW) after the 2004 EU enlargement. Massive influx of Polish migrant workers to UK resulted in a growing interest of British unions in targeting this specific national group, which translated into bringing Polish organisers to the UK to support the campaign and also into the Trade Union Congress (TUC) entering into formal cooperation with not only ‘Solidarność’ but also OPZZ (Fitzgerald, Hardy 2010). British unions had a clear and decisive impact on the process of Polish unions’ organising strategy formation, as the Confederation of Labour admits to learn from the TUC negative experiences with estrangement of the members losing/and or changing employment due to industrial

restructuring and subsequent strategic reaction marked by attempts to break away from 'consolidation' or 'close expansion' mode (see Simms, Holgate, Heery 2012).

The NSZZ 'Solidarność' model became the major frame of reference for trade unions striving to implement organising in other CEE countries, and Polish organisers frequently found their services sought for elsewhere in the region.

### The Approach of NSZZ 'Solidarność'

Successful establishment of the first enterprise-level union in the Szczecin hypermarket in 1998 by NSZZ 'Solidarność' was an event that set the dependency path of organising activities of the union. The initial campaign targeted large retail networks and produced very promising results. By early 2000s the unions managed to infiltrate the leading chains in the country, and in three cases entered into formal 'cooperation agreements' with employers, with a view of building up collective bargaining to the point of signing collective agreements. The instant success of organising the retail chains allowed the campaign to spread into other sectors such as banking and insurance, and security services.

The strategy of the union at the early stage very much emulated the patterns invented by American unions engaged in the organising campaigns in the previous decades. The DRZ would select a specific chain, subsequently target a particular outlet or number of outlets at a concrete location, and then the team of DRZ organisers would exercise a direct pressure on the workplace, aiming to recruit the employees who were expected to become the founding group of the new union. The DRZ team acted in a manner of a 'flying circus' moving around the country. Territorial units of NSZZ 'Solidarność' (*regiony*) would gradually employ organisers at the regional level but the process proceeded at an uneven pace, often triggering resistance of the local union apparatus fearing the competition for scarce resources from the new staff. The internal opposition was eventually overcome, and the consistent affirmation of organising by the national headquarters (reflected in the strategic documents adopted by consecutive national congresses of NSZZ 'Solidarność'). Furthermore, the problem of the new unions struggling to operate on their own following the departure of organisers became acknowledged. Technical issues regarding the means employed to infiltrate workplaces not accessible to outsiders (unlike large stores) by union organisers also received attention. As a consequence, the tactics employed by organisers in their quest for new members in non-unionised companies shifted

from 'direct pressure' to 'networking'. The latter term denotes a set of activities by union organisers aiming at using the initially established personal contacts to communicate with further potential members (family, friends, and in particular, workplace colleagues), and thus achieving the 'snowball effect', as the information on the union and the opportunities it offers spreads.

The centralised approach became the subject of critical assessment, and in 2011 the concept of a new, decentralised, model of organising emerged. According to the new concept, which was concurrently transposed into official policy of the union, the main responsibility for organising was allocated to the regions, and the macro-regional groups of organisers were established. The DRZ is now primarily responsible for co-ordination of organising and re-organising campaigns. The posts of regional coordinators have been created in all (33) but one regions. Alongside basic territorial units, there are also six macro-regions, comprising from 4 to 8 regions, headed by their coordinators. In order to strengthen regions' capacity for organising, the separate budgetary lines dedicated to organising have been created, to which 5% of a region's budget is assigned.

Another innovation was also introduction of re-organising campaigns, the example of which was an action leading to re-establishment of enterprise-level union in Lidl in 2013 with the support of union organisers. The union had been founded originally in 2005 but under constant pressure by the employer ceased to exist. Re-emergence of the union may thus be regarded as a sign of maturation of the organising model in Poland. It was also a manifestation of putting into action the formal declarations addressing necessity for recurring organising activities made in 2009 by the national congress.

## **The Approach of the Confederation of Labour OPZZ**

Confederation of Labour (Konfederacja Pracy, KP) is an OPZZ affiliate with approximately 15,000 members. The union was founded in 1999, in response to the success of the initial organising campaign of NSZZ 'Solidarność' and establishment of DRZ. The unique character of KP, when compared to other member organisations affiliated to OPZZ, stems from the fact it is an all-grade, cross-occupational trade union. According to the union's website 'the statute of the union has been formulated in such a way that bureaucratic procedures are simplified to the largest possible degree, and effective conduct of trade union activity in a hostile environment for

unions is facilitated' (Konfederacja Pracy 2014). The organisational structure is based on a nationwide registration principle, so that in any newly formed organization the Board or the delegate receives legal protection immediately after the organisation is established for the duration of the term extended by one year. It is not necessary to notify the court, only the nearest structure or representative of the Confederation of Labour. Even a single employee can subscribe to the inter-union structure. If three people in the workplace enrol in the union, one of them (the delegate) receives a legal protection. Membership is retained even in the case of an unionist moving on to another employer. The statute allows for enrolment in the union of people currently out of employment, and those employed on the basis of civil law contracts. Pensioners may form separate organisations.

At the national level, no centralised organising campaigns have been administered. OPZZ does not have a separate budget for organising. Thus, KP's approach may be described as 'bottom-up' campaigning, as the local representatives of the union attempt to endorse the workplace level initiatives of staff. Therefore, the union does not restrict its development activities to any particular sectors of the economy or specific occupational groups, even though, in the initial period of the unions history, the focus was on private sector, especially, services, in a way resembling the organising approach of the NSZZ 'Solidarność'.

## **Grassroots and Radical Trade Organising in Poland**

Besides two earlier discussed examples of the organising approaches of the Confederation of Labour and DRZ NSZZ 'Solidarność', we can identify several other tactics to enlarge union membership undertaken by the affiliates to OPZZ, the Trade Union Forum (FZZ) and non-affiliated unions. Based on our study carried out in 2009-2010 for European Trade Union Institute, four general observations can be noted (Czarzasty, Gajewska, Mrozowicki 2014).

Firstly, both in the case of the affiliates to OPZZ and FZZ decentralisation of recruitment practices is dominant. Their affiliates very rarely employ union organisers<sup>5</sup>. Instead, the role of company-level union leadership, their commitment and abilities to solve workers' problem at work was emphasised as the main way of attracting new membership. Inquired about the ways of forming new union

---

<sup>5</sup> An exception might be some short-term international union projects.

organisations, national-level union leaders often suggested that these are workers themselves who should self-organise. The role of union federations and confederations was to advise employees how to form a union. Secondly, a relative success of trade unions based on the representation of narrow occupational interests, such as the Polish Trade Union Alliance 'Kadra' or the Nationwide Union of Nurses and Midwives (OZZPiP), was noted. Their emergence can be linked with workers' disappointment with large, politically embedded union confederations. Unsurprisingly, some of them (including Kadra and OZZPiP) formed in 2002 the FZZ which explicitly rejected any involvement in high-level politics. Thirdly, union membership growth was not always directly linked to any specific organising tactics. Instead, efficient servicing, for instance legal support and co-financing professional training, was mentioned as a way of attracting new members. Finally, there were some unions, most notably those in the public services (e.g. nurses, midwives, postmen, custom officers) whose main way of membership recruitment relied on protest actions. The most prominent example is the OZZPiP (the union of nurses and midwives), established in 1992. It had grown to 79,000 members by 2009 in the wake of militant protests actions, such as the 'White Village' protests in 2007 (Kubisa 2014).

In addition to the above mentioned cases, Poland has also observed the emergence of relatively small, radical trade unions, resembling the model of social movement unionism due to their loose organisational structures and explicitly left-wing, anti-capitalist ideologies. The most prominent, even if niche example is the anarcho-syndicalist All-Poland Trade Union Workers' Initiative (OZZ IP). It was established in 2001 and currently has between 800–1000 members, the majority of which is younger than 30 years old. The union is active both in traditional manufacturing and in areas of high occurrence of precarious employment, including low-paid services, seasonal and temporary agency work. It does not employ organisers but relies on highly committed activists and supporters who do their work on voluntary basis. It sees its goal to 'stir people out from their lethargy' and to provoke them to self-organise, either as OZZ IP or as any other trade union.



## Atypical Employment and New Forms of Employee Representation

The assessment of organising efforts carried out by the Polish trade unions would be incomplete without mentioning some of their unintended consequences that could challenge their positive outcomes in a long run. The research carried out in old capitalist countries (Gumbrell-McCormick 2011) and in Poland (e.g. Trappmann 2011) makes it clear that one of the difficulties trade union faced in the recent years was to engage and represent precarious workers. In Poland, the category of precarious work pertains in particular to those in the low-paid jobs, forced self-employment and employed with temporary and civil law contracts. Due to scarce material and human resources, the most of organising campaigns of large unions were focused on those in standard employment, in large companies, in which relatively quick membership gains could have been achieved. In a long run, this can contribute to the preservation and consolidation of dual labour market, with a large number of unorganised, low-paid, precarious workers at its margins. In this section, we look closer how and to which extent the Polish trade unions have attempted to counteract this risk.

A challenge of particular weight that trade unions face is the shape of legal environment. By virtue of Trade Unions Act of 1991, starting up a new trade union at workplace level requires gathering at least 10 persons employed on the basis of employment contract. The next step is registration of the new union with a court of law. Such a low threshold set by the law resulted in a number of trade unions inflating in the 1990s. In the end of 20<sup>th</sup> century there were as many as 24,000 union organisations (Sroka 2000: 169). Combined with political cleavages tearing the Polish union movement apart (especially, the NSZZ ‘Solidarność’ and the post-communist OPZZ) during the transformation period, a relative ease in founding new organisations produced the phenomenon of ‘competitive pluralism’ (Gardawski 2003), which seriously hampered unions’ capacity to cooperate. Even though the number of active unions is nowadays considerably lower (no comprehensive statistics on the subject are available), and competitive pluralism evolved first into ‘particularist pluralism’, and recently into ‘cooperative pluralism’, the union movement is yet to consolidate. Internal organisational reform of major trade union confederations has also become an urgent need. Polish trade unions still struggle with the post-socialist

legacy as far as their organisational structure is concerned<sup>6</sup>. The structure of Polish union movement may be described as a pyramid with the solid foundation made of largely autonomous enterprise-level unions, above which a much weaker layer of sector level unitary unions and federations is located, and at the peak there are ‘umbrella’ organisations (confederations), whose capacity to control and coordinate the lower levels is limited. While the NSZZ ‘Solidarność’ is in relatively better position, being a general workers’ unions, it still lacks strong sector-level organisational structures.

Another serious obstacle hindering unions’ prospects for development stems from regulations on eligibility for union membership. First of all, legal environment is incoherent in that regard. On the one hand, the Constitution clearly affirms the citizens’ right to association, which is further reinforced by ILO conventions (in particular, the Convention 87) ratified by Poland, hence binding. On the other hand, the Trade Unions Act uses a narrow definition of the right to association, stating that only employees (that is, persons working on the basis of employment contracts) can establish trade unions, and former employees (pensioners, unemployed) can retain membership, provided they had belonged to a union prior to losing their employee status. As a consequence, vast part of people in employment, in particular, self-employed, and those working on the basis of civil law contracts, cannot join unions, not to mention setting up a new one. The former group is estimated to embrace 2.3 million persons, while the latter – even as much as 1.5 million.

Total volume of people in employment amounts to 16 million, of whom 12.6 million (79%) are employees (GUS 2014). Major trade unions have been calling for modification of the law, as they point out to the obvious discrepancy between the Trade Unions Act and the ILO Convention 87, as well as the Constitution. In the former case, NSZZ ‘Solidarność’ succeeded with their complaint to the Committee on Freedom of Association (CFA), which issued a recommendation requesting ‘the Government to take the necessary measures in order to ensure that all workers, without distinction whatsoever, including self-employed workers and those employed under civil law contracts, enjoy the right to establish and join organizations of their own choosing within the meaning of Convention No. 87’ (ILO 2012), yet the government has not taken any steps towards resolving the legal deadlock. In the

---

<sup>6</sup> Following the Martial Law in 1981, all trade unions were dissolved. In 1982 the process of new official trade unions establishment commenced, starting from the company level, followed by branch level. Only when those two stages were completed, a new confederation, OPZZ, was formally called into existence in 1984. The communist government deliberately chose the ‘bottom-up’ way of reconstructing trade unions to produce a fragmented structure, and thus to prevent the risk of another national-scale working class rebellion similar to that of 1980–1981.

latter case, OPZZ filed a motion to the Constitutional Court of Poland requesting a review of constitutionality of the Trade Unions Act in the part regarding restrictions on the freedom of association (Trybunał 2012). The case has not been recognised yet.

The employment structure of Polish economy does not work in favour of trade unions and workers seeking collective representation. Nearly 96% of all economic entities have less than 10 staff. Microfirms account for around 40% of the employees, who are effectively left out without on-site access to organised worker representation, as at least 10 employees are needed to set up an enterprise-level union. While theoretically such employees are not deprived of their right to association (it is feasible to be a union member via 'inter-company' union organisations), in practice they can barely exercise it.

Collective bargaining plays a marginal role in Poland. The most striking feature of the system is the virtual absence of sector-level bargaining. Polish law does not recognise a notion of 'sectoral collective agreement', only 'multi-employer collective agreements' are defined by the Labour Code. However, there were only 87 multi-employer collective agreements, covering some 390,000 employees, i.e. some 2,7 % of employees in 2013. Collective bargaining coverage is quite low at 28 per cent depending on data sources (ICTWSS database). There has been a tendency to 'trim down' the content of collective agreements (so it seldom exceeds the minimum guaranteed by the labour law) observed for many years. This trend has not been hampered by trade union organising as in the newly unionised companies collective agreements remain rare (Mrozowicki 2014).

## The Challenge of Precarious Work in Poland

In Poland the extent of the precarisation has been fully exposed to the public opinion, and, as a result, moved from the periphery to the centre of the public debate mostly thanks to trade unions' efforts. Unions first started using the term 'junk jobs' (*umowy śmieciowe*) in late 2000s, following the introduction of the term in Poland in 2005 (Kozek et al. 2005). The term is still considered controversial mostly due to blurred boundaries of the phenomena it denotes. Employers organisations and part of the public opinion often criticise inclusion of fixed-term employment contracts in the category. Yet, from the unions' perspective such an approach is understandable, as people employed on job contracts of limited duration are difficult to recruit into unions, being afraid of not having their contracts renewed. On the other hand,

there is a wide consensus over inclusion of civil law contracts and ostensible self-employment in the ‘junk jobs’ category. People in such position are estranged from trade unions, as they have little to offer to non-employees. Furthermore, despite claims of employers’ organisations and neoliberal media commentators, depicting ‘junk jobs’ as ‘lesser evil’ (had it been curbed, unemployment and extent of ‘shadow economy’ would inevitably rise), there is empirical evidence (in line with results of similar research conducted elsewhere) that precarious work is more a trap than a gate to stable employment (Bednarski, Frieske 2012).

The phenomenon of progressing precarisation is popularly explained as a form of market adaptation strategy by business seeking to reduce labour costs and further advance labour market flexibility. However, the picture is more complex, as the employed (or ‘service-providers’) also benefit from such a working-relationship, retaining more of their gross income than in the case of standard employment. Both in case of civil law contracts and self-employment, there is no data that would allow to determine what is the share of ‘forced self-employment’ and ‘forced work on civil law contracts’. Furthermore, there is also a practice of employing people part-time on the basis of employment contract (e.g. 1/60), while vast part of their work is carried out on the basis a civil law contract.

Recently the shift in the government’s approach towards civil law contracts was observed, with a concept of subjugating such contracts to mandatory social security contributions materialising into law. The government initiative drew support of all but one representative social partners at the national level, employer organisations included (Konfederacja Lewiatan 2014). In October 2014 the parliament voted in favour of the proposed changes. However, the period of *vacatio legis* is set to be long: in the vast part the amended regulations will come into force on 1 January 2016. The new regulations are yet to be signed into law by the President of Poland.

The extent of ‘junk jobs’ is wide. However, there is no consolidated source of data allowing to determine precisely the scale. The data are calculated and reported independently by the Social Security Institution (ZUS), the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (MPiPS) and the Central Statistical Office (GUS), therefore the figures vary (see: Table 2).

**Table 2. Precarious employment in Poland**

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Volume of civil law contracts (Ministry of Labour and Social Policy)	758 613	690 155	795 692	894 319	ND

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Volume of civil law contracts (GUS)	-	-	546 700	1 012 900	1 350 0000 (estimate)
Fixed term employment contracts (as % of all employment contracts) (GUS)	26.9%	26.4%	27.3%	26.9%	26.9%
Volume of self-employed (% of all employment contracts) (GUS)	2 328 000 (14.7%)	2 325 000 (14.7%)	2 346 000 (14.7%)	2 376 000 (14.7%)	2 292 000 (14.7%)

Source: Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (MPiPS), Central Statistical Office (GUS).

## Trade Union Responses to Non-standard Employment

Trade unions approach towards spreading of non-standard employment is negative. Obviously, unions' criticism of atypical employment is ideologically-driven as it leads to disempowerment of labour. However, unions' motives are also pragmatic. In the current legal environment, unions are hardly able to recruit non-standard workers. Therefore, a pressure put on curbing the extent of 'junk jobs' may, if efficient, lead to a growth of the worker population accessible to trade unions' organising efforts.

Nevertheless, there have been attempts to organise such categories of workers. It is noteworthy that considering the chaotic state of law, some unions voluntarily amended their statutes, yielding the way for non-employees to join. The example of such a organising campaign was the initiative by the Confederation of Labour (Konfederacja Pracy, KP), aimed at self-employed. Yet, the campaign soon entered a dead-end road.

Prospects for changing of the law so that the rights to association becomes available to all workers, and not just employees, are vague, even though unions arguments prove valid, as the recent ILO recommendation suggests. In those circumstances, unions channel their efforts mostly into social campaigns exposing the nature of non-standard employment as exploitation of labour. Arguably, the most notable example of such initiative has been the 'Syzyf' ('Sisyphus') campaign carried out by the NSZZ 'Solidarność' in late 2012. The nation-wide PR campaign targeted major electronic media and the Internet. Another example is the Hiperwyżysk (Hyper-exploitation) campaign, launched in 2011 by NSZZ 'Solidarność' branch-unit, the National Secretariat of Banks, Commerce and Insurance. The idea for the campaign was to start a website, where anyone could report a breach of employee rights in the retail networks.

NSZZ ‘Solidarność’ also made a complaint to the European Commission regarding the use of temporary employment contracts in 2012. In late 2013 the Commission acknowledged validity of some claims the union addressed<sup>7</sup>.

In August 2013 all three representative national trade union confederations issued a joint statement suggesting the possible modifications in the regulations on temporary contracts (Dialog 2014).

The government responded to those claims by presenting the draft legislation dealing with the issue in late 2014. The amendment is to improve regulations on fixed-term employment contracts. According to the government proposal, the maximum number of consecutive fixed-term employment contracts would be three, and their combined duration could not be longer than 33 months. Any fixed-term contract exceeding that time would transform automatically into a permanent one. The draft was well received by the social partners, although both sides addressed number of minor concerns to the legislative proposal.

## **New Ways of Approaching Workers: Non-union Associations of Employees and Radical Unionism**

The void of collective interest representation for people in employment either ineligible for union membership or uninterested in joining in for the reasons outlined above may potentially be filled by NGOs. The most eminent case of such association has been the ‘Stop the Exploitation. Biedronka Association’ (Stowarzyszenie Stop Wyzyskowi – Biedronka). The organisation was originally founded in 2002 under the name ‘Association of victims of big retail chains – Biedronka’ (Stowarzyszenie Poszkodowanych Przez JMD – Biedronka) as a self-defence group of the chain’s suppliers claiming for unpaid deliveries. Two years later, the Association

---

<sup>7</sup> In particular, the European Commission pointing out that: the differences between the notice period for fixed-term contracts and indefinite contracts means that fixed-term employees are treated less favourably, without any objective justification; the maximum one-month gap between two fixed-term contracts to prevent them being deemed successive is too short; the notion of ‘periodically performed tasks’, which allows an indefinite number of successive fixed-term contracts, is not sufficiently unambiguous to prevent the use of an excessive number of such contracts; Polish legislation wrongly excludes apprenticeships and public or publicly supported training, integration or re-skilling programmes from the Labour Code’s protection against an excessive number of sequential fixed-term contracts (Surdykowska 2014).

re-organized, taking a more interest-based approach to provide representation both for the network's business partners and for employees engaged in disputes with the employer. The Association enjoyed some success in representing former employees' interests and gave effective legal support to employees struggling to claim unpaid wages (especially overtime payments) (Czarzasty 2012). Another example of NGO is the *Karat* coalition, comprising over 63 organisations from 25 countries focused on women's human rights, and gender justice in Central and Eastern Europe, as well as in Central Asia. The Women's Congress (Kongres Kobiet), the largest congregation of women's organisations and movements in the country also built ties with trade unions, and, while both sides approach each other with caution, there is a growing understanding that constituencies of all collective actors discussed above may benefit from mutual co-operation, as they partly overlap (Mrozowicki, Trawińska 2013, Kamińska-Berezowska 2014).

Another way of engaging and organising precarious workers which is frequently mentioned in the literature is related to the cooperation between trade unions, social movements and local community groups. The logic behind this approach is that in the wake of neoliberal changes marked by the fragmentation of occupational experiences the workplace-level ceases to be the crucial reference point for precarious workers. Many of them are forced to frequently change their jobs, experience the periods of unemployment and work without stable, long-term contracts. The notion of community unionism was coined to reflect trade unions involvement in organising employees at the level of local communities rather than companies. It was successfully adopted by several radical trade unions, for instance the Independent Workers Union organising East European migrants in the north of Ireland (Stewart et al. 2014). The same logics of moving beyond a workplace and linking trade unions with broader social movements was also used by the SEIU campaign, Justice for Janitors, since the mid 1980s in the USA, or the London Living Wage Campaign based on the cooperation of religious and community groups and various trade union branches within the TELCO (The East London Communities Organisation's Living Wage Campaign). We can also observe the idea of mobilising precarious workers in the political initiatives and movements, such as Indignados in Spain or San Precario Network in Italy.

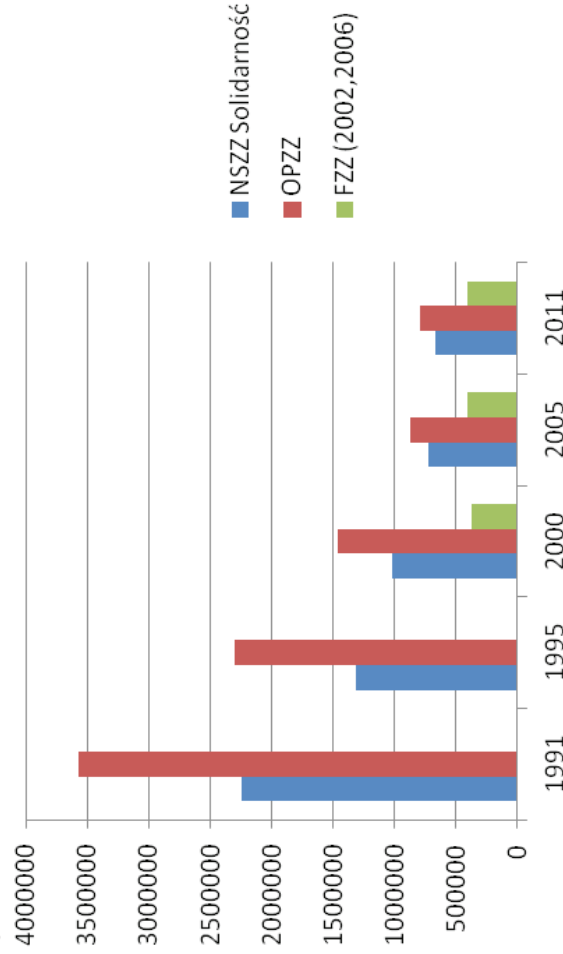
Despite the legacy of NSZZ 'Solidarność', social movement and community unionism in Poland after 1989 has been rather weak. Some observers, such as David Ost (2002), have argued that rejection of social movement and political unionism and a turn to the workplace-based, 'bread-and-butter' unionism model reflected the disappointment of workers with the results of trade union political involvement

in market reforms in the 1990s. Nevertheless, the traditions of the cooperation between unions, communities and social movements has not totally disappeared. In some areas affected by the restructuring of heavy industries, such as Upper Silesia or Nowa Huta, trade unions engaged with the unemployed providing various low-costs support and recreation services (Stenning 2003). There are also the evidences of cooperation between unions and political movements on the issue of 'junk jobs', as for example during the demonstration 'Awake Poland' (in September 2012) organised jointly by the right-wing conservative party Law and Justice, NSZZ 'Solidarność' and the communities of Catholic radio station 'Radio Maryja'. Finally, an example of community activism is the involvement of Workers' Initiative (OZZ IP) and Feminist Think Tank (a feminist NGO) in support and organising women in the ex-mining area of Wałbrzych who protested against their evictions from squatted flats in 2008, as well as ongoing cooperation of Workers' Initiative in the Hipolit Cegielski plant with left-wing squatters milieu in Poznań.

## Hard and Soft Outcomes of Trade Union Organising in Poland

The evaluation of the outcomes of trade union organising in Poland is difficult for several reasons, but the lack of systematic, longitudinal data on membership size and structure of the majority of the Polish trade unions and too short time span are most important. Regardless of the problematic reliability of self-reported union statistics, the available data leaves no doubt that aggregated membership in NSZZ 'Solidarność' and OPZZ did not increase in the last years. In the case of FZZ it was relatively stable (see graph 1, Gardawski et al. 2012). Some quantitative success was noted in selected sectors. A good example is the National Section of Commerce of NSZZ 'Solidarność' which associated 9,800 members in 2009 and (according to its leader) 15,000 in 2012 (Mrozowicki 2014a). In the case of the Confederation of Labour, the membership might be as high as 15,000 (a sign of rapid growth since 2006 when it amounted to 5,000) but according to its leaders it is very unstable. Out of 54 affiliates to OPZZ and FZZ and three autonomous unions studied, 16 observed membership growth in 2005–2009. Notably, half of unions, in which number of members increased, did not employ any special organising techniques, but relied on efficient servicing at the workplace level (Czarzasty et al. 2014: 123).



**Figure 1. Union membership in NSZZ 'Solidarność', OPZZ and FZZ**

Source: Self-reported union membership statistics presented in Gardawski et al. 2012. Please note that FZZ data refers to 2002 and 2006.

In terms of membership diversity, Polish trade unions did not decisively transform themselves over recent years. Despite some progress in terms of engaging young people, the 2014 survey data showed that merely 4 per cent of people aged 18–24 belonged to trade unions, a slight progress only as compared to 2012 when no membership in this age group was noted (Felińskiak 2014). The Polish unions are still dominated by men, especially at the higher and executive levels of trade union structures (Mrozowski, Trawinska 2013) and union presence in private companies is still much lower than in the public sector. A particular challenge is also connected with very low unionisation rates of workers in part-time and temporary employment.

Regardless of its rather weak quantitative outcomes, it would be unjust to say that trade union organising in Poland did not bring any tangible effects. First of all, it did contribute to establishing unions in some non-unionised companies in practically all economic sectors. Weak and unstable as they are, new unions began to challenge power relations between the management and workers and at least in some cases contributed to concrete gains in terms of pays and social benefits. Organising also led to the emergence of new and reformed activists who began to exercise pressure on the established union structures (Mrozowski 2014). Finally, the experiences of trade union organising contributed to the circulation of the ideas of new, pro-active unions

which are able to adjust to changing economic environment. All of which indicates soft, qualitative results of organising which can bear quantitative result in the future.

## Conclusions

Trade unions cannot survive without recruiting new members regardless of political and economic circumstances. In the environment marked by neoliberal labour market policies, anti-union management and eroding corporatism, the organised labour has no other choice than to actively seek for new ways of representing workers, invest in organising and training and experiment with new union renewal approaches. This article has demonstrated that trade unions in Poland have not looked powerlessly at their membership erosion even though no coherent 'Polish' organising model has emerged. In reaction to the decomposition of their strongholds in heavy industry, Polish unions have tried many tools and tactics to expand their activities to private and public service sectors. It included the creative adaptation of the Anglo-Saxon organising approaches, bottom-up and protest-based organising, as well as more efficient servicing to the existing and new members.

We have indicated in the article that the 'organising' approach itself cannot be the solution to all problems faced by the Polish and, more broadly, Eastern European trade unions. The main reason is not the deficiency of the approach itself but the fact that membership is just one dimension of trade union strength and vitality. For instance, the comprehensive and centralised union organising campaigns seem to be insufficient to represent the interests of precarious workers due to unstable, highly flexible and individualised nature of their employment. Our discussion of trade union tactics to tackle the problem of 'junk jobs' in Poland shows that Polish unions began to understand the need to combine organising with political action aimed at legislative changes.

Obviously, it is also necessary to re-link trade union organising with collective bargaining and, to the extent it is possible, collective agreements at sectoral and national levels. It is a difficult in the Polish context where employer organisations systematically avoid negotiations at supra-enterprise level and the level of social trust (and solidarity) remains rather low. Yet, if the positive outcomes of organising can be enjoyed only by a relatively small fraction of workforce, mostly in stable employment and in large, multinational enterprises, trade unions can only expect

further marginalisation. More broadly speaking, the organising approaches cannot be reduced to 'apolitical toolbox' (Simms, Holgate and Heery, 2012) detached from the broader questions of workers' empowerment, economic democracy, social justice and social regulation of market economy. The reorientation to organising is important, but Eastern European trade unions need still to address the question of the political, social and economic goals behind their attempts to recruit new members.

## References

- Bednarski, M., Frieske, K.W. (eds.) (2012), *Zatrudnienie na czas określony w polskiej gospodarce. Społeczne i ekonomiczne konsekwencje zjawiska*, Warszawa: IPiSS
- Behrens, M., Hamann, K., Hurd R. (2004), 'Conceptualizing Labour Union Revitalization', in: C.M. Frege, J. Kelly (eds.), *Varieties of Unionism. Strategies for Union Revitalization in a Globalizing Economy*, Oxford: Oxford University Press: 11–29
- Bernaciak, M., Gumbrell-McCormick, R., Hyman, R. (2014), *Trade Unions in Europe: Innovative Responses to Hard Times*, Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, available at: <http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/id-moe/10688.pdf>
- Czarzasty, J. (2010), *Stosunki pracy w handlu wielkopowierzchniowym w Polsce*, Warszawa: Oficyna Wydawnicza SGH
- Czarzasty, J., Gajewska, K., Mrozowski, A. (2014), Institutions and Strategies: Trends and Obstacles to Recruiting Workers into Trade Unions in Poland. *British Journal of Industrial Relations* 51(1): 112–135
- Czarzasty, J., Mrozowski, A. (eds.) (2014), *Organizowanie związków zawodowych w Europie. Badania i praktyka*, Warszawa: Wyd. Naukowe Scholar
- Dialog (2014), Posiedzenie Zespołu ds. prawa pracy i układow zbiorowych w dniu 17 marca 2014 r., available at: <http://www.dialog.gov.pl/aktualnosci/art,434,posiedzenie-zespołu-ds-prawa-pracy-i-układow-zbiorowych-w-dniu-17-marca-2014-r-.html>
- Fairbrother P., Yates, Ch. (2003), 'Unions in crisis, unions in renewal?', in: P. Fairbrother, Ch. Yates (eds.) *Trade Unions in Renewal. A Comparative Study*, London: Routledge: 1–31
- Feliksiak, M. (2014), 'Związki zawodowe i prawa pracownicze', *Raport CBOS* 106
- Fitzgerald, I., Hardy, J. (2010), 'Thinking outside the box? Trade union organizing strategies and Polish migrant workers in the United Kingdom', *British Journal of Industrial Relations* 48 (1): 131–150
- Gall, G. (2009), 'Union organizing – past, present and future', in: G. Gall. (ed.) *The Future of Union Organizing. Building for Tomorrow*, Houndmills: Palgrave: 1–9

- Gardawski, J. (2001), *Związki zawodowe na rozdwoju*, Warszawa: Instytut Spraw Publicznych
- Gardawski, J. (2003), *Konfliktowy pluralizm związków zawodowych*. Warszawa: FES
- Gardawski, J., Mrozowski, A., Czarzasty, J. (2012), 'History and current developments of trade unions in Poland', *Warsaw Forum of Economic Sociology* 5(3): 9–50
- Gumbrell-McCormick, R. (2011), 'European trade unions and "atypical" workers', *Industrial Relations Journal* 42(3): 293–310
- GUS (2014), *Kwartalna informacja o rynku pracy w III kwartale 2014 r.*, available at: [http://stat.gov.pl/download/gfx/portalinformacyjny/pl/defaultaktualnosci/5475/12/18/1/kwartalna\\_informacja\\_o\\_ryнку\\_pracy\\_w\\_iii\\_kwartale\\_2014.pdf](http://stat.gov.pl/download/gfx/portalinformacyjny/pl/defaultaktualnosci/5475/12/18/1/kwartalna_informacja_o_ryнку_pracy_w_iii_kwartale_2014.pdf)
- Häkkinen, M. (2013), *The Baltic Organising Academy. How to build a Multinational and Multisectoral Organising Program?*, available at: [http://www.fesmoe.eu/pdf\\_en/baltic\\_organising\\_academy\\_11\\_2013.pdf](http://www.fesmoe.eu/pdf_en/baltic_organising_academy_11_2013.pdf)
- Heery, E., Adler, L. (2004), 'Organizing the unorganized', in: C.M. Frege, J. Kelly (eds.), *Varieties of Unionism. Strategies for Union Revitalization in a Globalizing Economy*, Oxford: Oxford University Press: 45–69
- Hurd, R.W. (2006), *The Rise and Fall of the Organizing Model in the US*, Cornell University, ILR School, available at: <http://digitalcommons.ilr.cornell.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1303&context=articles>
- ILO (2012), Recommendation of the ILO Committee on Freedom of Association of 12 March 2012, available at: [http://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=1000:50002:0::NO:50002:P50002\\_COMPLAINT\\_TEXT\\_ID:3057194](http://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=1000:50002:0::NO:50002:P50002_COMPLAINT_TEXT_ID:3057194)
- Kamińska-Berezowska, S. (2014), 'Możliwości dzielenia się wiedzą „starych” i „nowych” ruchów społecznych. Refleksje socjologiczne w oparciu o badania jakościowe w województwie śląskim', in: J. Czarzasty, A. Mrozowski (eds.), *Organizowanie związków zawodowych w Europie. Badania i praktyka*, Warszawa: Wyd. Naukowe Scholar: 93–113
- Konfederacja Lewiatan (2014), *Pracodawcy i związkowcy o ozusowaniu umów zleceń*, available at: [http://konfederacjalewiatan.pl/opinie/stosunki\\_pracy/1/pracodawcy\\_i\\_zwiazkowcy\\_o\\_ozusowaniu\\_umow\\_zleceń](http://konfederacjalewiatan.pl/opinie/stosunki_pracy/1/pracodawcy_i_zwiazkowcy_o_ozusowaniu_umow_zleceń)
- Konfederacja Pracy (2014), About us. Available at: <http://konfederacjapraczy.org.pl/o-nas/>
- Kozek, W., Kubisa, J., Ostrowski, P. (2005), 'Bliżej Junk Job niż Working Poor. Nisko kwalifikowana nisko płatna praca w usługach w Polsce', *Polityka Społeczna* 10: 1–8
- Kubisa, J. (2014), *Bunt białych czepeków. Analiza działalności związkowej pielęgniarzek i położnych*, Warszawa: Wyd. Naukowe Scholar
- Krzywdziński, M. (2010), 'Organizing employees in Central and Eastern Europe: the approach of Solidarność', *European Journal of Industrial Relations* 16(3): 277–292
- Mrozowski, A., Trawińska, M. (2013), 'Women's union activism and trade union revitalisation: the Polish experiences', *Economic and Industrial Democracy* 34(2): 269–289

- Mrozowicki, A. (2014a), 'Varieties of trade union organizing in Central and Eastern Europe: A comparison of the retail and automotive sectors', *European Journal of Industrial Relations*, DOI: 10.1177/0959680113519314, published online before printing
- Mrozowicki, A. (2014b), 'Między remedium a pułapką: taktyki, doświadczenia i konsekwencje organizowania związków zawodowych w Europie Środkowo-Wschodniej', in: J. Czarzasty, A. Mrozowicki (eds.), *Organizowanie związków zawodowych w Europie. Badania i praktyka*, Warszawa: Wyd. Naukowe Scholar: 153–173.
- Mrozowicki, A., Antoniewicz, P. (2014), 'Radical trade unions in Poland: the meanings and mechanisms of union radicalisation in a post-socialist capitalism', in: H. Connolly, L. Kretsos, C. Phelan (eds.), *Radical Unions in Europe and the Future of Collective Interest Representation*, Peter Lang, Bern: 209–230
- Ost, D. (2009), 'The Consequences of Postcommunism: Trade Unions in Eastern Europe's Future', *East European Politics and Societies* 23 (1): 13–33
- Pedersini, R. (2010), *Trade union strategies to recruit new groups of workers*, available at: <http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/eiro/studies/tm0901028s/tm0901028s.htm> .
- Simms, M., Holgate, J. (2010), 'Organising for what? Where is the debate on the politics of organising?', *Work, Employment and Society* 24(1): 157–168
- Simms, M., Holgate, J., Heery, E. (2012), *Union Voices. Tactics and Tensions in UK Organizing*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press
- Stewart, P., Garvey, B., McKearney, T. (2014), Alternatywny sposób organizowania związków zawodowych pracowników migrujących do Irlandii Północnej, in: J. Czarzasty, A. Mrozowicki (eds.) *Organizowanie związków zawodowych w Europie. Badania i praktyka*, Warszawa: Wyd. Naukowe Scholar: 41–57
- Sroka, J. (2000), *Europejskie stosunki przemysłowe w perspektywie porównawczej*. Wrocław: Wyd. Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego
- Surdykowska, B. (2014), *Fixed-term contract regulation under EU scrutiny. EIRO online*, available at: <http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/eiro/2014/01/articles/pl1401029i.htm>
- Trappmann, V. (2011), 'Precarious employment in Poland - the legacy of transition or an effect of European integration?', *EMECONI*, available at: <http://www.emecon.eu/current-issue/second/vera-trappmann/>
- Trybunał Konstytucyjny (2012), *A motion to the Constitutional Court of Poland of 27 June 2012*, available at: <http://trybunal.gov.pl/sprawy-w-trybunale/katalog/s/k-113/>
- Wenzel, M. (2009), 'Związki zawodowe w badaniach CBOS 1980–2008', in: J. Gardawski, (ed.), *Polacy pracujący a kryzys fordyzmu*, Warszawa: Wyd. Naukowe Scholar: 533–550
- Vandaele, K. (2006), 'A report from the homeland of the Ghent system: unemployment and union membership in Belgium', *Transfer: European Review of Labour and Research* 13 (4): 647–657

Voss, K. (2010), 'Democratic dilemmas: union democracy and union renewal', *Transfer: European Review of Labour and Research* 16(3): 369–382