

National trade unions leaders interviews

 **breakback**

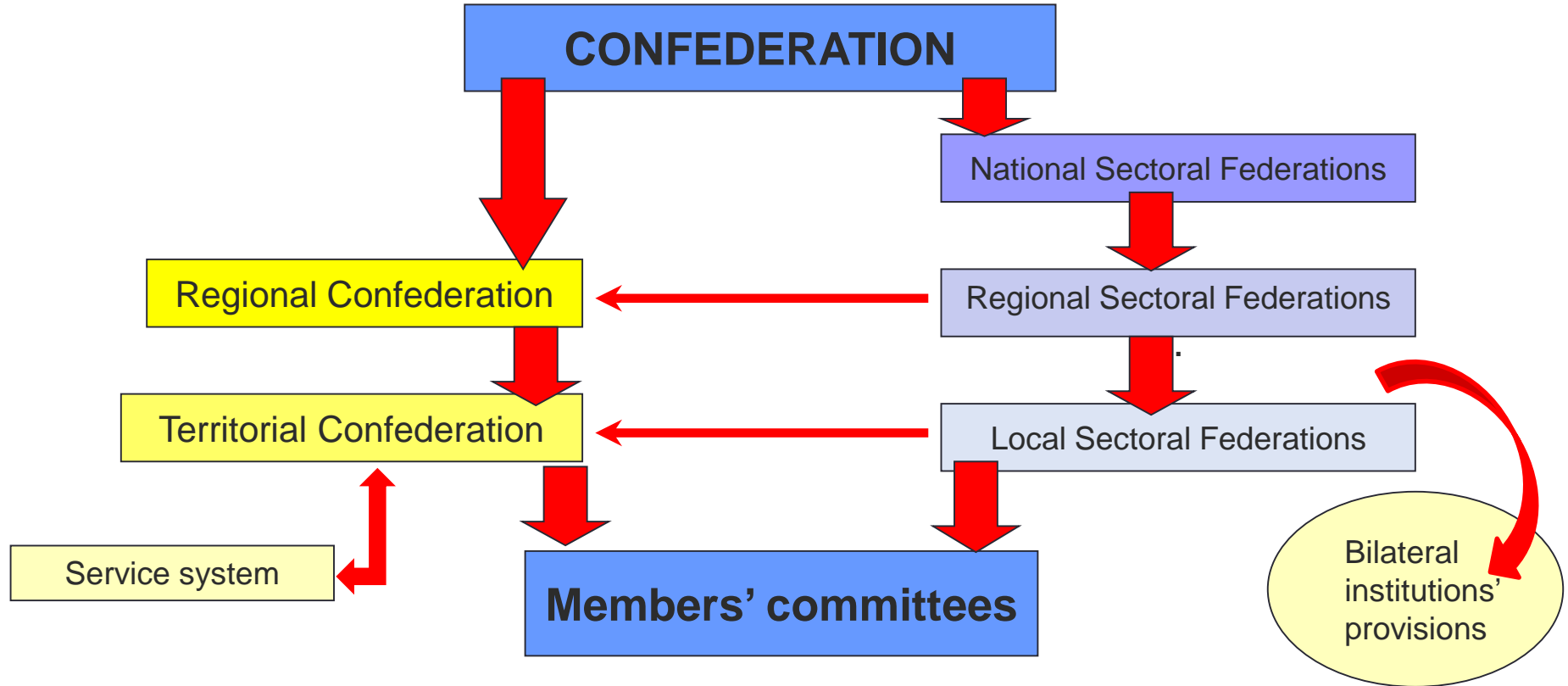
Our interviews

CGIL : Union secretary with responsibilities for organizational politics.

CISL: Union secretary with responsibilities for organizational politics and FIT-CISL national secretary (transport and logistic).

UIL: Union secretary with responsibilities for organizational politics and union official with responsibilities on membership.

ITALIAN UNION ORGANIZATION



Main membership trends

- Membership decline, but less significant than the active workforce contraction (union density slightly rising)
- Decline of retired workers force (still the largest Union, mostly in CGIL and CISL)
- Significant growth of 'atypical workers' federations and, most of all, services unions' federation
- 'Poor' membership
- Changes in members account system



Changes in members-unions relations

- Fragmentation of the workplace: Workers are no more gathered in specific workplace.
- A majority of new members arrives from the individual protection system (i.e. services - unemployed)

- From 'Ideological unions' membership' to a differentiated way of enrollment:

- New kind of work, traditionally outside of the usual unions constituency

Main issues:

- Broaden out the unions scope
- 'Loyalty' problem, that is to involve in union participation

Strategies

Organizational responses, bargaining innovation and service system improvement

Strategies a)

Organisational responses

Organizational rationalization (involving both sectoral unions and territorial structures)

Cost containment



Abandonment of some intermediate facilities to move more resources on the territory

« The assessment that we made is that centres of aggregation and discussion, on politics, on economy and so on, are no longer there. There are no more party cell, [...] no more parishes, [...] so the concern was that there was no physical place where young people could meet and discuss »

Improve effectiveness of local actions

Restructuring of UST in order to improve effectiveness of local actions



« The logic should be to care for people more and more carefully and be able to return to the outskirts. That is, we have to do our job not only in the workplace, but also looking for local communities which need answers. »

Strategies b)

Bargaining innovation

Broadening scope: «(We) can't be the organization that enroll just permanent contract workers anymore. We don't want to be an organization for those already 'guaranteed'»



'Traditional' work:
typically dispersed in
the productive system



«[We should focus on what is] new
and almost new. The latter meaning
atypical work, the former meaning the
independent professional world.»



- «Contrattazione inclusiva» (*inclusive bargaining*), by production chains or by sites (airports, hospitals,...)
- New models of grassroots aggregation ('organizing')
- Presentation of the *Charter of Universal Labour Rights* – popular initiative law.



- Efforts to valorize the social local bargaining (between Unions and PA)
- Renewing the contract bargaining in fragmented or individualized sectors (i.e. logistics)
- Strengthening of bilateral arrangements (new services)
- Union-Government bargaining on legal safeguards of independent professionals
- Strength of the union's representative training system



- Organizing aimed to re-insert these group in the National Collective Contract (Sectoral)
- Strengthening of bilateral arrangements (new services)

Strategies c)

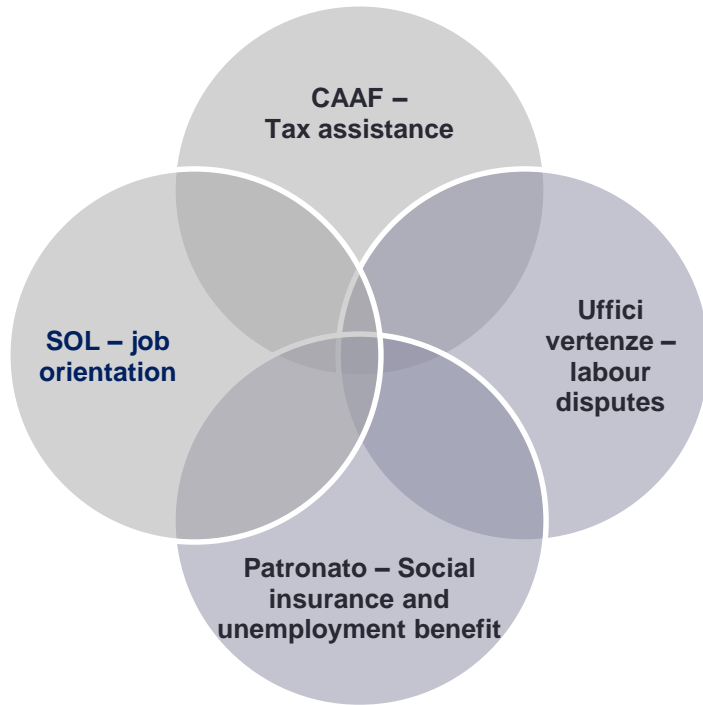
Service system improvement

Re-thinking the role of services in Union's strategies

«The idea that there was a primacy of collective protection over individual protection is an idea that is gradually dwindling and the organization seems to me more and more aware that this is a two-sided problem»



Traditional Unions' service system



General trend towards enlargement of the system service

Ex:

- Women desk
- Migrant workers Center
- Support on open exams, disputes with Public Administration
- Expert advice for particular group of workers
- Other linked associations (tenants, old people...)

CGIL

looking for innovative service

- Professional training, open exams help and sustain (sectoral covered service)
- Local initiative to attract non standard workers or independent professional (i.e., opening of coworking spaces)

«So in this case, in addition to these services offers, we are thinking a lot, working a lot, to build also an offer of spaces for participation»



CISL

looking for innovative service

- Role of bilateral arrangements in providing specific answers in different sectors.
- Focus on freelance and independent professionals: Building networks and providing specialized services
 - Vivace: an association for freelance and independent professional , organized as a community
 - Opening of coworking spaces

«In general, as I was saying, within bilateral arrangements grants can be set up for the purchase of books, aid to pay tuition fees and therefore there is a wide range of services»



UIL

looking for innovative service

Ex:

- Opening of UIL offices to youth association
- Annual travel to Auschwitz for young people
- Professional training in UIL offices

« In the last 5 years, we have profoundly changed our organizational policies, we have tried to create an organization that was somehow less bureaucratic, that would not talk in a "unions' newspeak". And that was closer to the territory. »



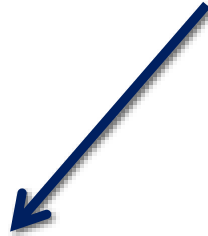
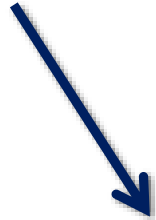
Evaluation – According to union officials words

- Inconsistent success of inclusive bargaining (particularly by production chain)
- Constraints in building a relationship with firms with non-traditional workplace (i.e. Amazon)
- The ability of bilateral bargaining to respond to specific needs is assessed as more effective.

«Here we have a virtual poster saying "work in progress" everywhere, absolutely, but it's something we've bet a lot on and... and it takes a lot of effort, too, because it's not easy to change an organization used to think in terms of separate compartments»

Evaluation

- Strengthening of service system
- New aggregative space



The service system succeeded to connect unions with workers dispersed throughout the territory. Yet, successful actions are dependent on local voluntaristic initiative more than overall strategy

Example: Coworking Passwork in Bergamo (CGIL -<https://www.passwork.info>)
Partita Viva Coworking in Vicenza (CISL) (www.partitaviva.org)
Access to work training in Terni (UIL)

Organizational changes:

These strategies describe, first of all, a shift in internal organization and self-representation, in terms of where they should be and who they should represent:

«I often say in our governing bodies: ‘do you realize that fifteen-twenty years ago, if someone in the same position as me have told you that the CGIL aims to give the same rights and opportunities not only to the employee, but also to the parasubordinate and the freelance (partite IVA)’, on this issue here, I would have been ... expelled... expelled, yes, that's the right word»

Italian Unions are undergoing a profound process of organisational change in order to rethink the relationship between trade unions and world of work

This results in a broadening of both what the unions offer and the ways they try to reach workers.

However, the effects of this reorganisation on membership are not yet fully clear to unions officials, nor in terms of numbers, nor in terms of ‘loyalty’