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Break up to get back together.
The impact of unionisation through innovative service provision
(BREAK-BACK)

Final Minutes of the kick-off meeting

CISL NATIONAL STUDY CENTER
Via della Piazzola, n. 71, Firenze (Italy)

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April 24-25th 2019

The kick-off meeting of the BREAK-BACK project took place on April 24th and 25th 2019 at the CISL National Study Center, as planned in the work programme. Representatives of the partners, responsible for different activities of the project, participated in the meeting.

Participants: Francesco Lauria, Luigi Lama, Ilaria Carlino, Vilma Rinolfi, Ettore Innocenti (Cisl); Marco Betti (Fondazione Tarantelli); Alberto Gherardini, expert; Andrea Bellini (University of Florence); Oscar Molina, Alejandro Godino (Uab-Quit); Trine Pernille Farsen (Faok, by skype); Inga Blazienie, Boguslavas Gruzevskis (Dsti); Melinda Kelemen (Diesis).

Agenda of the meeting

The meeting started the 23th of April at 13.00 and finished the 24th April 2019 at the same time (venue: Cisl National Study Center of Florence). The first day was dedicated to welcome and presentations, introduction and timeline of the project, national cases and meaningful experiences (Lithuania, Spain, Denmark, Belgium).

The second day has included the presentation of Italian case and the discussion of the project phasis and methodologies. After this first part the meeting analyzed the project future deliverables and issues linked to administrative tasks.

Main contents: 23th April

Francesco Lauria (Cisl) explained the basis idea of the project: “it may be necessary to break up some rigidity in the protection of work as a way to strengthen personalized support instruments”. By the way it is important that these form of protection cannot fail to “get back” to the collective solidarity that is a crucial point of industrial relation and union history. Service provision is one of the possible forms that unions undertake to achieve inclusive labour markets against the backdrop of deregulation and welfare retrenchment. Lauria exposed also the main aims of the project: to assess how trade unions respond to the processes of individualisation in the society; to observe the impact of innovation in services provision as a trade union strategy to enhance its membership; to focus on services provision as an instrument to reach social groups and individuals who are often excluded from union protection.

Another point discussed in the meeting was the specific objectives of the action: to assess what strategies trade unions adopt to overcome workers disaffection with active participation in interest representation practices, to collect and describe the variety of services provided in five Eu Member States, to evaluate the effectiveness of this strategy of membership revitalization.

At the end of the presentation the updated project workplan has been exposed and discussed together with the division of roles and responsibilities.

Finally one Cisl experience in Italy has been briefly exposed: (Vivace, association for self employed workers protection and representation).

After this presentation national case studies has been exposed.

Inga Blazienie and Boguslavas Gruzevskis (Lithuanian Social Research Center) presented the framework of trade unions in Lithuania (low trade union membership, weak social dialogue at national, sectoral and company level). The presentation exposed the levels of bargaining in the country, the real diffusion of the agreements, the most recent unions strategies including the unions services to the members and the workers in general.

Melinda Kelemen (Diesis) presented the state of industrial relations in Belgium with two main focuses: the characteristic of trade union representation and their representativeness in the country and the characteristics of collective bargaining.

A point analyzed in the presentation has been the unemployment benefits normally paid out through the unions. Mrs Kelemen exposed also the national level of social dialogue (National Labour Council and Central Council in the Economy) and the different level of collective bargaining in the country.

Another point of the presentation was linked to the services provided by the Belgian unions in order to growing membership and new trade union strategies in order to reach new type of workers (ex: platform workers).

Trine P. Larsen and Anna Ilsoe (Faos- University of Copenhagen) exposed the Danish situation (high union density, high collective agreement coverage, quite high shop

steward coverage). Relations between social partners shows: high trust, consensus and respect for divergent interests but with some changes in the recent years.

Mrs Larsen exposed the trends of unionization in Denmark and selected some interesting examples of innovative trade union services (expanding membership package to cover various business services; regulating digital platforms, freelancers and subcontracted workers, strengthening rights for non-standards workers).

After this presentation: Alejandro Godino and Oscar Molina (Uab) exposed the case of Spanish industrial relations and the changes in labour legislation, union membership and organizing, level and coverage of collective bargaining.

The two researchers exposed some examples of cooperation between “traditional” unions and new type of workers associations in Spain.

Main contents: 24th April

Andrea Bellini (University of Florence) exposed the Italian “case”.

The Italian system of industrial relations presents “bivalent” features. It relies on collective autonomy as a source of strength for the social partners, but in a context of institutional fragility, due to low legislative regulation and weak institutionalisation. The scenario has nevertheless changed. In 2000s, the season of “political exchange” has ended. In the same years, a process of decentralisation has taken place, following the sign of the 2009 and 2010 agreements on the reform of collective bargaining. Moreover, in 2010, the FIAT-Pomigliano case – with FIAT’s withdrawal from the Metalworking industry-wide agreement and exit from Confindustria, the set up of “new companies” at the workplace level and the signature of new company agreements – has further moved the barycentre of collective bargaining towards the company level. State intervention has also increased. Law 148/2011 establishing the so-called “proximity agreements” is an example. Industrial relations, however, have continued to show a certain dynamism. The bilateral agreements on the “rules of the game”, signed in the last decade are a proof of vitality. See, for example: the 2009 agreements on collective bargaining; the 2011 agreement on representativeness; the 2014 framework agreement; and the 2018 programmatic agreement. Against this backdrop, union membership has shown a trend which distinguishes Italy from most of other European countries. The number of union members, in fact, has declined from 1980 to 1995; then, it has started rising continuously. Union density, too, have increased, since the beginning of the global crisis, in 2008. The three main trade unions, though, have followed different paths of development. In CGIL, retirees have permanently surpassed active members in the first half of the 1990s. The same has happened in CISL, although in 2010 active members have, once again, become the most important component of union membership. In UIL, instead, active members are largely predominant. Overall, from 1981 to 2001, the proportion of retirees and foreign workers has increased, while the incidence of both public and private sectors has reduced. Private sector, particularly, has lost 2 million union members. In the last

decade, instead, changes have been of a slight significance. As regards productive sectors, agriculture and manufacturing are those that have lost more union members, counterbalanced by both public and private services. Three different arguments are used to explain the recovery of union membership and density in the country. First, employment has grown from 1995 to 2008, with the significant contribution of trade and services. Second, services such as fiscal assistance have become the front door of trade unions. Third, the struggle against the reduction of public expenditure has been a facilitator in attracting new members. Concerning the impact of services on financing, fiscal assistance and patronage are nowadays the second and third sources of funds, after membership fees. Union services have also been a fertile terrain for experimentalism. Examples of innovative services are those provided by: Nidil (CGIL) e Felsa (CISL), addressed to atypical and self-employed workers; Agenquadri (CGIL), covering managers and high-skilled professionals; and, more recently, Vivace (CISL) and Sindacato-Workers (UIL), for freelancers and IT workers.

Alberto Gherardini (University of Florence) starts a presentation on the research methods to be applied to the research activities by each partner.

The research working plan has 4 main Tasks:

1. Draft a baseline report on industrial relations for each country involved in the project. The baseline report will be divided into two parts: the first on the industrial relation system (general overview, data on union membership) and the second on main national trade unions' strategies to attract new membership, with specific attention to service provision. A country report outline will be delivered by Univ. of Florence by the end of May.
2. The selection of at least two case study per each country based on the recognition of innovative service provision of task 1.

In Task 1 and 2 information should be gathered by desk analysis and 4/5 interviews with peak level national/sectoral trade unionists. A semi-structured questionnaire will be delivered by the Univ. of Florence by October 2019.

3. Case study research should focus on the features and the rationale of services, on trade unionists' effectiveness evaluation. At this stage, researchers should collect service users' figures and email addresses. They have also to interview 2 trade unionist per each case study and to organize a focus group with service providers. Univ. of Florence will deliver research tools (1 semi-structured questionnaire, 2 grids to collect figures and email addresses) by February 2020.
4. Launch of the survey to service users. Lead partner and Univ. of Florence will be responsible for: questionnaire and web survey design, sampling, implementation of the survey, data analysis and reporting. All the partners have to translate the questionnaire in their national languages and provide email addresses.

The presentation is followed by an in-depth debate mainly on how to define innovative services. Partners agreed to use a broad definition of services (including occupational

welfare, training activities and self-employment-oriented services). By the way, services to be selected should satisfy the following criteria:

- Services designed to increase membership;
- Addressed to target groups (vulnerable dependent workers and I-PROs);
- To be evaluated services should not be too much recent.

Partners agree to present a draft of the first part of the baseline report by mid-September and to discuss the contents of the second part during a virtual meeting to be held by the end of September.

Melinda Kelemen exposed the problem of privacy rules in particular in order to collecting addresses and for the implementation of the web survey.

This important issue will be discussed in the following meetings.

The two days kick off meeting ended after the exposition of administrative tasks linked to the developing of the project.