

Trade Unions and European Social Policy: the Example of the German DGB

Thomas Fetzer

RESÜMEE

Dieser Aufsatz analysiert am Beispiel des Deutschen Gewerkschaftsbundes (DGB) die Rolle der Gewerkschaften bei der Etablierung der EG-Sozialpolitik in den 1970er Jahren. Ausgehend von einer Bestandsaufnahme europäischer Gewerkschaftsstrukturen nach 1945 wird argumentiert, dass sich diese Rolle weder als die einer zivilgesellschaftlichen Avantgarde für eine Supranationalisierung dieses Politikfeldes noch als die eines defensiven „Bremsers“ angemessen beschreiben lässt. Es wird gezeigt, dass sich der DGB einerseits aktiv für eine supranationale Sozialpolitik einsetzte, diese aber andererseits auf eine Ergänzung und Koordinierung nationaler Wohlfahrtsstaatlichkeit begrenzen wollte, insbesondere im Hinblick auf redistributive Elemente der Sozialpolitik. Der Aufsatz illustriert damit, dass bei der Analyse nichtstaatlicher Akteure nicht nur auf deren Rolle als Lobbyisten in Brüssel zu achten ist, sondern auch darauf, wie solche Akteure die Reichweite supranationaler Politik definieren helfen.

Social policy, along with a number of other fields like regional and environmental policy, became a new domain of European Community (EC) activities during the 1970s. Prior to that, leaving aside a few specific measures in the framework of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), social policy had by and large been confined to the regulation of cross-border worker mobility. The European Social Fund created by the European Economic Community (EEC) treaty in 1957-8 was negligible in terms of its financial volume, while a treaty provision on equal pay for men and women had few practical ramifications until the late 1960s.¹

1 For an overview of European social policy see for example Linda Hantrais, *Social Policy in the European Union*, 3rd edition, London 2007.

Change started with the summits of The Hague and Paris in 1969 and 1972 where a consensus on pursuing a more active social policy took shape. The rationale for this initiative was similar to the one underlying the parallel beginnings of EC regional policy, namely to complement economic and monetary integration, and to provide a cushion against possible social dislocations resulting from that integration. The Commission duly submitted the EC's first social policy 'action programme', which the Council adopted in January 1974. It included measures to promote employment, better working and living conditions, worker participation in industry, the equal treatment of men and women, and a reform of the social fund. Not all of these objectives were achieved. Worker participation initiatives, for example, became bogged down in disagreement over which model to implement. Still, from the mid-1970s onwards a limited number of new directives did see the light of day, in particular concerning gender equality and occupational health and safety. Two agencies were set up to conduct research in the areas of occupational training and 'working and living conditions'. The consultation of 'social partners' in EC decision-making was given added emphasis, most clearly in a number of 'tripartite conferences' to discuss employment policy, supplemented, from 1973, by occasional broader gatherings deliberating a concerted macro-economic EC response to the oil crisis.²

Underlying this process were a variety of factors, from the protest and strike wave after 1968 and the electoral advance of social democracy in many European countries, to the return of unemployment after 1974 and the emerging debates on the regulation of multinational companies. In a longer-term perspective EC policy initiatives could build on efforts for international social policy coordination by the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the Council of Europe.³ From the perspective of this particular issue, the role of non-state actors in European integration, one of the most interesting questions is how and to what extent the trade unions shaped the emerging agenda for a European social policy during the 1970s – a time when they reached the apogee of their post-war influence, expressed in growing membership figures, rising bargaining strength, and their crucial role in tripartite arrangements to promote growth and contain inflation in the wake of the oil crisis.⁴

Not least against the backdrop of this general trade union advance a number of authors have suggested that unions were also instrumental in bringing about a European social policy during the 1970s, through their general lobbying for a 'social dimension' to counterbalance market integration, as well as through specific efforts to shape policy initiatives, e.g. in the fields of vocational training and occupational safety.⁵ However, these ar-

2 See Maria Eleonora Guasconi, *Paving the Way for a European Social Dialogue. Italy, the Trade Unions and the Shaping of a European Social Policy after the Hague Conference of 1969*, in: *Journal of European Integration History* 9 (2003) 1, pp. 87-110.

3 See Cédric Guinand, *Die Internationale Arbeitsorganisation (ILO) und die soziale Sicherheit in Europa (1942–1969)*, Berne 2003.

4 See Donald Sassoon, *One Hundred Years of Socialism, The West European Left in the Twentieth Century*, London 1996, chapters 6 and 8.

5 See Guasconi, *Paving the Way* (note 2); Stefan Remeke, *Gewerkschaften als Motoren der europäischen Integration: Der DGB und das soziale Europa von den Römischen Verträgen bis zu den Pariser Gipfelkonferenzen*

guments sit uneasily with more general assessments of the trade unions' role in European integration. Since the late 1970s these have mostly emphasized the unions' defensive attitudes, reacting to rather than proactively shaping integration.⁶ Thus, Patrick Pasture and Johan Verberckmoes have argued that 'as a matter of fact the trade union movement shows a blatant reluctance to make use of the opportunities offered by Europe.'⁷

This controversy reflects not only diverging assessments of what trade unions did, but, more fundamentally, contrasting notions of what they could have done. Those emphasizing the unions' positive contribution to integration point to employers and governments as frustrating more far-reaching initiatives, while the 'sceptics' emphasize missed opportunities by the trade unions themselves. This article seeks to address this issue by probing more deeply into the complexity of trade union notions of 'social Europe' during the 1970s through a case study of the German Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund (DGB). The case of the DGB is particularly interesting not only because it has been the leading affiliate of the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC, and its predecessors) created in 1973, but also because the German confederation is often described as a 'vanguard force' within the ETUC by those who emphasize the trade unions' allegedly pro-active role vis-à-vis European institutions.⁸ Building on the available literature⁹, the first section outlines the institutional structures of trade unions at the European level, and the role of the DGB within those structures. The second and main section, based on research in the DGB and ETUC archives, then addresses the question of the DGB's approach towards European social policy during the 1970s. I argue that the DGB was faced with the strategic question of how to conceive 'social Europe' in terms of the interplay between European and national regulation, and that the function of EC-level initiatives came to be vaguely and narrowly defined as complementing national welfare states and industrial relations regimes. Next to the German unions' commitment to national Keynesianism and industrial relations traditions, this was also due to the still weakly perceived impact of economic globalization. The conclusion briefly contrasts this pattern with the period

(1957–1974), in: Jürgen Mittag (ed.), *Deutsche Gewerkschaften und europäische Integration im 20. Jahrhundert*, Mitteilungsblatt des Instituts für soziale Bewegungen 42 (2009) 1, pp. 141–164.

6 For influential early examples see Wolfram Elsner, *Die EWG. Herausforderung und Antwort der Gewerkschaften*, Cologne 1974; Lutz Niethammer, *Defensive Integration – Der Weg zum EGB und die Perspektive der westeuropäischen Einheitsgewerkschaft*, in: Ulrich Borsdorf et. al. (eds.), *Gewerkschaftliche Politik: Reform aus Solidarität*. Zum 60. Geburtstag von Heinz O. Vetter, Cologne 1977, pp. 567–596.

7 Patrick Pasture/Johan Verberckmoes, *Working Class Internationalism and the Appeal of National Identity: Historical Dilemmas and Current Debates in Western Europe*, in: Patrick Pasture/Johan Verberckmoes (eds.), *Working Class Internationalism and the Appeal of National Identity: Historical Dilemmas and Current Perspectives*, Oxford/New York 1998, pp. 1–41, here: p. 22.

8 Remeke, *Gewerkschaften als Motoren* (note 5).

9 Corinne Gobin, *Consultation et concertation sociales à l'échelle de la Communauté économique européenne. Etude des positions et stratégies de la Confédération européenne des syndicats (1958–1991)*, Brussels 1996; Barbara Barnouin, *The European Labour Movement and European Integration*, London 1986; Jan-Erik Dolvik, *An Emerging Island? ETUC, Social Dialogue, and the Europeanization of the Trade Unions in the 1990s*, Brussels 1999; Emilio Gabaglio/Reiner Hoffmann (eds.), *The ETUC in the Mirror of Industrial Relations Research*, Brussels 1998. For a long-term perspective on the role of the DGB in the process of European integration see in particular Mittag, *Deutsche Gewerkschaften* (note 5).

since the late 1980s when a stronger threat perception – against the backdrop of the Single Market project – led the DGB to step up its lobbying for supranational social policy measures. The conclusions also discuss some more general implications of the case study for the analysis of non-state actors in European integration.

Trade unions as a European actor

In a longer-term perspective the trade union movement can be considered as a European actor since the turn of the twentieth century, when the movement set up its first international confederation and a number of sector-specific ‘international trade secretariats’; while nominally ‘international’, these organizations, with the exception of the American Federation of Labour (AFL) and its affiliates, were exclusively composed of European trade unions.¹⁰ There were enormous internal conflicts from the outset, not only because of national rivalries, but also because of contrasting political approaches to trade unionism, in particular with regard to the split between social democratic reformism and syndicalism. In the wake of the First World War these conflicts were exacerbated by the peace settlement and the Bolshevik revolution, which led to the formation of separate communist and also Christian Internationals.¹¹

After 1945 there was a short-lived attempt at reunification which was thwarted by the onset of the Cold War. The Soviet leadership wanted a communist international trade union organization as a propaganda tool, while the United States (US) government, assisted by the American labour movement, enlisted social democratic unions as allies to contain the appeal of communism among West European workers. As a consequence, the communist-driven World Federation of Trade Unions rivalled the socialist/social democratic International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU), as well as the reconstituted Christian International.¹²

European integration initially only had a marginal effect on this complex configuration. The communist unions were ideologically opposed to European integration itself, and they refused to deal with the new supranational institutions. This pattern only began to change from the 1970s onwards, and with a great deal of variation between affiliates from different countries.¹³ The socialist and Christian Internationals, on the other hand,

10 See Marcel van der Linden et. al. (eds.), *The International Confederation of Free Trade Unions*, Berne 2000; for the exceptionally active transport workers’ international see Sigrid Koch-Baumgarten, *Gewerkschaftsinternationalismus und die Herausforderung der Globalisierung: das Beispiel der Internationalen Transportarbeiterföderation (ITF)*, Frankfurt 1999.

11 See Patrick Pasture, *Histoire du syndicalisme chrétien international: la difficile recherche d’une troisième voie*, Paris/Montreal 1999; Reiner Tosstorff, *Profinintern. Die Rote Gewerkschaftsinternationale 1920–1937*, Paderborn 2004.

12 For the Cold War involvement of international trade union bodies see for example Anthony Carew, *Labour under the Marshall Plan*, Manchester 1987; Federico Romero, *The United States and the European Trade Union Movement, 1944–1951*, Chapel Hill 1992.

13 See Juan Moreno, *Trade Unions without Frontiers. The Communist-Oriented Trade Unions and the ETUC, 1973–1999*, Brussels 2001.

had already created European regional organizations in the early 1950s though this was partly due to the growth of trade unionism in other continents and the concomitant need to deal with the increasing heterogeneity within the international organizations. Still, both the ICFTU and Christian unions also established special bodies to deal with the new European institutions. In the case of the ICFTU this was first limited to the coal and steel industries – in response to the ECSC – before the EEC Treaty entailed the establishment of the more encompassing European Trade Union Secretariat in 1958. However, these bodies, composed of delegates from the six founding member states, had very meagre resources and were further weakened by frequent internal disputes and competence quarrels with the respective Internationals, and between themselves.¹⁴ Given the subordinate status of social and industrial relations issues in the EC treaties, there was of course little that could have ‘pulled’ the unions more strongly into the European arena. At the same time, as Pasture has demonstrated, the unions themselves developed few initiatives to influence European institutions – except with regard to representation in these institutions themselves, which became an end, rather than a means of trade union action at the European level.¹⁵ By the late 1950s, however, the trade unions’ importance for securing progress in integration appeared less indispensable in the eyes of many national governments. Consequently, their lobbying for trade union representation in EC institutions also became less successful.¹⁶ For example, while the unions managed to place two representatives in the ECSC High Authority during the Schuman Plan negotiations, they achieved nothing comparable in the EEC after 1958. Here, the role of trade unionists was reduced to participation in informal working groups and consultative bodies such as the Economic and Social Committee.¹⁷ Significant change only occurred from the late 1960s. A lengthy debate on the need for a more comprehensive and active trade union organization at the European level culminated in the creation of the ETUC in 1973, which brought together national centres not only from the now nine EC member states, but also from the remaining countries of the European Free Trade Association (EFTA). In 1974 ETUC’s pan-European character was further reinforced through the accession of all European organizations affiliated with the Christian International, and, still more spectacularly, the entry of the Italian *Confederazione Generale Italiana del Lavoro* (CGIL), the major European affiliate of the Communist World Confederation of Labour. By the late 1970s ETUC represented 29 national trade union centres with a combined membership of about 44 million workers, and it had become the universally acknowledged voice of labour at the European level.¹⁸

14 See Patrick Pasture, *The Flight of the Robins. European Trade Unions at the Beginning of the European integration process*, in: Bart de Wilde (ed.), *The Past and Future of International Trade Unionism*, Ghent 2000, pp. 80–103.

15 Pasture, *The Flight of the Robins* (note 14).

16 See Patrick Pasture, *Trade Unions as a Transnational Movement in the European Space 1955–65*, in: Wolfram Kaiser/Peter Starie (eds.), *Transnational European Union. Towards a Common Political Space*, London/New York 2005, pp. 109–130.

17 Niethammer, *Defensive Integration* (note 6), p. 577.

18 For this transformation see Barnouin, *European Labour Movement* (note 9), pp. 14 ff.; Dolvik, *Emerging Island*

While this represented a significant historical achievement in terms of organizational breadth, it inevitably also entailed more difficult internal decision-making processes. For example, the accession of the Eurosceptic British and Scandinavian affiliates undermined the earlier general pro-European consensus with regard to the 'high politics' of integration.¹⁹ Differing national industrial relations and trade union traditions made compromise-building still more difficult, for example in relation to the issue of enterprise-level worker participation.²⁰

Still, the creation of the ETUC undoubtedly marked a watershed in the history of European trade unionism. Interestingly, however, the belated birth of a comprehensive pan-European trade union body cannot simply be interpreted as a trade union response to the new European integration dynamics since the EC summit of The Hague in 1969. To be sure, this dynamic did play an important role. The new prospects for EC enlargement made the reorganization of the ETUC an urgent task, while the imminent departure of the British, Danish and Irish unions raised the question of the viability of the ICFTU's old European regional organization. At the same time, the French President Charles de Gaulle's resignation in 1969 and the coming to power of a social democratic-led German government created a new, if vague, groundswell for a stronger 'social dimension' in European trade union circles.²¹

However, two other aspects were at least as important as the new integration dynamics, both of which connected European developments to changes in the global context. First, the late 1960s witnessed the emergence of a vivid public and trade union debate on economic internationalization, in particular with regard to the role of multinational companies (MNC). This reflected not only the steep rise in foreign direct investment in many West European countries since the 1950s but also the innovative strategies of such firms to integrate their operations across borders, as well as the prominence of US-owned firms among Europe's MNCs, which translated into anxious concerns about the 'American challenge'.²² Against this backdrop, a stronger and more unified European trade union organization was increasingly perceived as necessary to enhance union capacities in dealing with multinational firms – not only with regard to lobbying for their EC level regulation, but also to step up the trade unions' autonomous capacity for cross-border coordination. It was mainly to this latter end that British and Scandinavian unions supported the creation of an all-embracing European confederation in the early 1970s.

(note 9), pp. 42–75; Cyril Gläser, *Europäische Einheitsgewerkschaft zwischen lähmender Überdehnung und umfassender Repräsentativität: EGB-Strukturen und die Herausforderung der Erweiterung*, in: Jürgen Mittag (ed.), *Deutsche Gewerkschaften und europäische Integration im 20. Jahrhundert*, Mitteilungsblatt des Instituts für soziale Bewegungen 42 (2009) 1, pp. 215–233, here: pp. 219f.

19 In 1975, for example, due to internal disagreements, the ETUC proved unable to deliver an opinion on the Tindemans report – see Gobin, *Consultation* (note 9), pp. 480f.

20 See Thomas Fetzner, *Industrial Democracy in the European Community. Trade Unions as a Defensive Transnational Community, 1968–88*, in: Marie-Laure Djelic/Sigrid Quack (eds.), *Transnational Communities: Shaping Global Economic Governance*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010, pp. 282–304.

21 Niethammer, *Defensive Integration* (note 6), p. 585.

22 Jean-Jacques Servan-Schreiber, *Le défi américain*, Paris 1967.

Against the plans of French and German unions to restrict ETUC membership to EC member states they insisted on a more comprehensive composition that would facilitate practical efforts for bargaining coordination in MNCs.²³

Still more importantly, the reform of European trade union structures was closely linked to changes in transatlantic relations and the new phase of East-West *détente*. The surge of anti-Americanism in many West European countries in the wake of the Vietnam War and the transatlantic rows over *Ostpolitik* could not fail to influence European trade union opinion, not least because there emerged a number of initiatives to support *détente* through East-West trade union encounters. The rapprochement with 'Euro-Communist' unions like the Italian CGIL was another clear example of this process, which raised hopes for a reunification of the European labour movement.²⁴ The creation of the ETUC, in this perspective, primarily reflected a growing European self-confidence vis-à-vis the US, and a concomitant aspiration to make European trade unionism more independent of the ICFTU – as reflected in the dropping of 'free' from the new European confederation's name after a controversial internal debate.²⁵ In fact, these European developments entailed a major falling-out in transatlantic trade union relations. A number of Asian and African ICFTU affiliates likewise criticized European aspirations as undermining the principles of 'free trade unionism' in the world.²⁶ It should be said, however, that the ETUC did continue to cooperate with the ICFTU after the mid-1970s despite a much stronger emphasis on European autonomy.

Ever since the creation of the ETUC many observers have pointed to the influential role of the German DGB within the new organization. In fact, the DGB is often referred to as having had an 'informal veto' power during the 1970s and 1980s.²⁷ The German role was not only strong in terms of ETUC's personnel – DGB leader Heinz-Oskar Vetter was president of ETUC and its predecessor throughout the 1970s – but also in the decision-making of ETUC's executive committee. This primarily reflected the importance of size. Alongside the British Trade Union Congress (TUC) the DGB was the largest European trade union organization in the second half of the twentieth century.²⁸ In France and Italy, the other large EC member states, the union movement remained divided along ideological lines, and at least in the French case, the dominant communist confederation did not join the ETUC before the end of the Cold War.²⁹ Secondly, DGB influence within ETUC was indirectly enhanced by the Eurosceptic attitudes of the TUC and the

23 Barnouin, *The European Labour Movement* (note 9), pp. 14 f.

24 See Niethammer, *Defensive Integration* (note 6), pp. 583 f.

25 Niethammer, *Defensive Integration* (note 6), pp. p. 585.

26 Barnouin, *The European Labour Movement* (note 9), pp. 16 f.

27 See for example Justin Greenwood, *Interest Representation in the European Union*, 2nd edition, Houndmills 2007, p. 110.

28 See Bernhard Ebbinghaus/Jelle Visser (eds.), *The Societies of Europe. Trade Unions in Western Europe since 1945*, Basingstoke/Oxford 2000.

29 The Communist French CGT eventually joined the ETUC in 1999.

Scandinavian affiliates until the late 1980s.³⁰ Thirdly, the European industry federations – trade union bodies representing labour interests in specific sectors³¹ – obtained seats and votes within ETUC, too, and many of them, not least the powerful organizations in the metal and chemical industries, were dominated by their German affiliates like IG Metall and IG Chemie.³²

This last remark already points to the multi-level character of the German trade unions' European activities, which also had important implications for decision-making processes within the DGB. The post-war reorganization of the German trade union movement had been based on the model of a confederation made up of industry-based affiliates, which were fully autonomous with regard to collective bargaining and strike policies in their sectors, while the DGB's tasks were confined to coordination and interest representation in the political sphere.³³ In terms of European trade union activities this meant that the large affiliates like IG Metall and IG Chemie developed their own structures and policies. They participated in sector-specific European trade union bodies (the European industry federations), and, through them, developed contacts to the supranational EC institutions, in particular the European Commission. At the same time, the DGB's European policies were usually developed in close coordination with the most powerful affiliates, particularly in cases where Community initiatives and legislation touched on industrial matters, for example with regard to collective bargaining regulation. Likewise, DGB representatives in EC institutions such as the Economic and Social Committee always included prominent leaders from IG Metall and IG Chemie.³⁴

The DGB's internal organization of European activities was also of a complex nature. Initially, competences for dealing with EC matters were accorded to the international department but in practice other departments soon became involved, too. The economic department started to play the leading role with regard to aspects of Common Market regulation, while the social policy department became the main actor dealing with the Directorate General (DG) for Social Affairs.³⁵ From the mid-1960s the DGB's European portfolio further diversified through the inclusion of the departments for collective bargaining and co-determination (later renamed *Gesellschaftspolitik*), the latter dealing with the question of employee participation in EC legislation. In 1972 an attempt was made

30 For the TUC see Thomas Fetzer, *Turning Eurosceptic: British Trade Unions and European Integration (1961–1975)*, in: *Journal of European Integration History* 13 (2007) 2, pp. 85–102.

31 See Ingrid Stöckl, *Gewerkschaftsausschüsse in der EG: die Entwicklung der transnationalen Organisation und Strategie der europäischen Fachgewerkschaften und ihre Möglichkeiten zur gewerkschaftlichen Interessenvertretung im Rahmen der europäischen Gemeinschaft*, Kehl/Strasbourg 1986.

32 See Jörg Rumpf, *IG Metall, IG CPK und der Prozess der europäischen Integration*, in: Jürgen Mittag (ed.), *Deutsche Gewerkschaften und europäische Integration im 20. Jahrhundert*, Mitteilungsblatt des Instituts für soziale Bewegungen 42 (2009) 1, pp. 123–140.

33 For a general account of German post-1945 trade union history see Michael Schneider, *Kleine Geschichte der Gewerkschaften. Ihre Entwicklung in Deutschland von den Anfängen bis heute*, 2nd revised edition, Bonn 2000, pp. 270–482.

34 For more details see Rumpf, *IG Metall* (note 32), pp. 125 ff.

35 See Remeke, *Gewerkschaften als Motoren* (note 5), pp. 155–6.

to coordinate these various activities through a special European integration department, which, however, ended in failure only three years later.³⁶

The DGB's European lobbying corresponded to the typical practice of most national non-state actors to combine interest representation through national and European channels.³⁷ Lobbying of the German government was combined with direct contacts to supranational EC institutions, in particular the Commission, and with efforts to influence ETUC positions. The case of employee participation in the so-called European Company Statute (ECS), discussed since the late 1960s, illustrates this pattern especially well. On the one hand, DGB representatives made strenuous efforts to convince their European trade union counterparts of the merits of German co-determination. On the other hand, they energetically lobbied the German Ministry of Justice and Commission officials. There was even an element of strategic personnel policy here – it was no coincidence that the DGB pressed for Wilhelm Haferkamp (until 1967 head of the DGB's economic department) to become European commissioner for internal market affairs from 1970, the DG in charge of European company law harmonization.³⁸

The German DGB and European social policy

German and European trade union documents confirm that the DGB played an active role in the process to launch a European social policy in the early 1970s. In August 1972 DGB representatives participated in meetings with civil servants of the German chancellor's office in preparation for the Paris summit later that year, and shortly afterwards DGB leader Vetter wrote a formal letter to Willy Brandt, the social democratic German chancellor, which stressed the need for a stronger social dimension of European integration as a counterweight to the planned economic and monetary union.³⁹ Authors like Stefan Remeke and Maria Eleonora Guasconi are thus correct up to a point in their emphasis on the DGB's contribution to the emergence of a European social policy.⁴⁰ Indeed, following the Paris summit, the DGB was among the most active European trade unions in shaping Commission drafts for a European social action programme. In May 1973, the DGB board adopted a policy document outlining its positions on the Commission programme.⁴¹ The document emphasized three major elements: In the field

36 See Jürgen Mittag / Maren Zellin, Grenzen der Koordination europäischer Gewerkschaftspolitik: Die Episode der Abteilung Europäische Integration des DGB (1972–1975), in: Jürgen Mittag (ed.), Deutsche Gewerkschaften und europäische Integration im 20. Jahrhundert, Mitteilungsblatt des Instituts für soziale Bewegungen 42 (2009) 1, pp. 165–185.

37 See Greenwood, Interest Representation (note 27), chapter 2.

38 See Thomas Fetzer, Defending Mitbestimmung: German Trade Unions and European Company Law Harmonisation 1967–1990, in: Economic and Industrial Democracy 31 (forthcoming 2010) 4.

39 Mittag and Zellin, Grenzen der Koordination (note 36), pp. 165–6.

40 See note 5.

41 Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund: Vorschläge für ein soziales Aktionsprogramm der Europäischen Gemeinschaft, 20 February 1973, Archiv der sozialen Demokratie (AdSD), Bestand DGB, 24/888.

of employment policy, the DGB argued that labour market problems had increased in a number of regions and sectors, and that more efforts were therefore necessary to coordinate national economic and employment policies. Secondly, with regard to standards of welfare and working conditions, the DGB urged greater efforts to achieve an upward harmonization of these standards across the EC – without preventing more advanced countries from moving ahead. Thirdly, the importance of a European dimension of ‘industrial democracy’ was emphasized. The DGB held that the EC should provide a legal framework for European collective bargaining, and that it should also undertake more efforts to implement co-determination rights for employees in multinational companies, not least in the framework of the ECS.⁴²

While these initiatives clearly testify to the active role of the DGB in launching a European social policy, the proposals themselves remained rather vague. In fact, subsequent developments revealed a much more cautious DGB attitude in many respects, as well as a number of internal disagreements between the DGB and its affiliates, particularly IG Metall, which neutralized some initiatives in practice.⁴³ For example, with regard to employment policy, DGB representatives had nothing positive to say about ideas of the ETUC secretariat to establish a European labour agency or a permanent committee for employment policy. Instead, the DGB favoured more co-ordination among the national labour agencies and a harmonization of national labour market statistics. Moreover, national governments were asked to submit regular employment reports to the Commission.⁴⁴ The same caution was displayed towards proposals to set up a European *comissariat de plan* as in the French system of indicative planning.⁴⁵

As far as welfare policies were concerned, the DGB’s formula of ‘upward harmonization’ left it open how such a process should be promoted through European action. When subsequently faced with concrete initiatives in this direction, the DGB, in fact, appears to have pulled on the brakes. In October 1973, for example, the Belgian Fédération Générale du Travail de Belgique (FTGB) suggested a higher social policy budget to raise the lowest national standards above a given threshold but met with determined German trade union resistance. Gerd Muhr, head of the DGB’s social policy department, pointed out that such a ‘schematic harmonization’ was not desirable because it did not take into account the ‘different traditions and values’ of the national societies. In the absence of truly democratic European governing structures, member states needed a sufficient degree of autonomy to manage their social security systems.⁴⁶ Proposals for a European unemployment insurance were likewise rejected as ‘premature’. DGB representatives ar-

42 Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund: Vorschläge (note 41).

43 The following builds on Thomas Fetzer, Europäische Strategien deutscher Gewerkschaften in historischer Perspektive, in: Michèle Knodt / Barbara Finke (eds.), Europäisierung der Zivilgesellschaft: Konzepte, Akteure, Strategien, Wiesbaden 2005, pp. 299–318.

44 Hausmitteilung Abteilung Sozialpolitik an Abteilung Europäische Integration, 5 June 1975, AdSD, Bestand DGB, 24/2076.

45 Aktenvermerk Abteilung Europäische Integration, 12 September 1973, AdSD, Bestand DGB, 24/1518.

46 Aktenvermerk Abteilung Europäische Integration, 9. Oktober 1973, AdSD, Bestand DGB, 24/2158.

gued that European solidarity should be promoted by reducing unemployment across the Community, rather than by using EC funds to mitigate its consequences.⁴⁷ The DGB advocated much less ambitious measures, for example the gradual harmonization of social insurance definitions and the exchange of statistical data.

With regard to working conditions, the DGB, despite its confessed commitment to European minimum standards on working time and holiday entitlements, refused to accept any binding European legislation that would interfere with free collective bargaining in the Federal Republic. A Council recommendation on the 40-hour week was only accepted because it would not have a binding effect on national law. In general terms, DGB representatives stressed that 'Brussels' could not be allowed to become an arbiter in matters of domestic industrial relations.⁴⁸ Likewise, when faced with a draft directive to promote equal pay in early 1974, the DGB massively lobbied the German Ministry of Labour to oppose the envisaged controls of collective bargaining agreements on the basis that this would violate *Tarifautonomie*. The lobbying proved successful: in the subsequent Council deliberations the contested paragraph was dropped.⁴⁹

The DGB's call for a European dimension of 'industrial democracy' was hardly more than a slogan, and it was anything but new. Since the late 1960s, the DGB had lobbied for the inclusion of German-style co-determination into the planned ECS, but by that time it had already become clear that these German ideas would not make their way into European legislation.⁵⁰ In the field of collective bargaining there were even more contradictions. The DGB asked for a new European legal framework for collective bargaining both at industry level and within multinational companies. DGB (and ETUC) chairman Vetter also advocated more efforts for an autonomous cross-border coordination of collective bargaining.⁵¹ Clearly, however, any such endeavour had to be supported by the DGB's industrial affiliates, and such support was not forthcoming. IG Metall, the most powerful industry federation, had already vetoed proposals for European bargaining in the coal and steel industry in the 1950s.⁵² It also opposed the new ideas of the early 1970s. In 1971, the IG Metall board noted with concern that 'there is too much talk about European collective agreements'.⁵³ Subsequently, IG Metall chairman Eugen Loderer made it clear that even European framework agreements related to working time or holiday entitlements were 'not realistic'. Similarly, IG Metall undermined any pros-

47 Aktenvermerk Abteilung Europäische Integration (note 46)

48 Aktennotiz zur Besprechung im Bundesarbeitsministerium, 26. Juni 1974, AdSD, Bestand DGB, 24/2096.

49 See Ursula Engelen-Kefer, Sozialpolitik der Europäischen Gemeinschaft: Rückblick und Perspektive, in: Soziale Sicherheit 24 (1975) 2, pp. 97-101.

50 See for example: Protokoll der Sitzung des Bundesvorstandes des Deutschen Gewerkschaftsbundes, 7 February 1967, AdSD, Bestand DGB, 5/DGAI/535.

51 Protokoll der Sitzung des Bundesvorstandes des DGB, 3 February 1970, AdSD, Bestand DGB, 5/DGAI 536.

52 Protokoll der Sitzung des Exekutivausschusses des 21er Ausschusses, 14 Oktober 1955, AdSD, Bestand DGB, 5/DGAI 91.

53 Niederschrift der Klausurtagung des Vorstandes der IG Metall vom 6. bis 9. Januar 1971, AdSD, Bestand IG Metall, Vorstand, Nr. 1/71-6/71.

pects for cross-border bargaining in multinational companies with its verdict that foreign capital had to be challenged primarily at the national level.⁵⁴

The preceding analysis should not be taken to mean that the DGB took little interest in the EC's new social policy dimension. What it demonstrates is, rather, that the German unions' conceptualization of 'Social Europe' was far more complex than is often assumed. The crucial issue was the relationship between supranational and national social policies, and in this regard DGB positions were characterized by three core elements.

First, the DGB supported the notion that EC social policy should complement and coordinate national policies, while showing little interest in European harmonization and/or the wholesale transfer of social policy competences to the EC level. Moreover, the DGB insisted on what later came to be called the principle of subsidiarity: EC legislation should not excessively restrict the scope for implementing domestic social policies. In some cases, for example the above-mentioned working time and equal pay directives, this autonomy discourse was reinforced by the classic trade union insistence on free collective bargaining.

Secondly, social policy at EC level was not primarily to be carried out by the creation of additional supranational authorities. The DGB was unenthusiastic about suggestions for a European *commissariat de plan* or a central labour agency in Brussels. It preferred the method of co-ordination of national social and labour market policies, for example, the use of more sophisticated data exchanges and a system of regular monitoring. In a similar way, the creation of a European archive for collective bargaining was called for, which would collect data from all member states and make them available for exchange across borders. European institutions were thus also seen as service-providers for national actors.

Thirdly, the DGB supported the limitation of EC social policy to regulatory matters. In this view, EC institutions should concentrate on the procedural regulation of problems that resulted from market integration, and the setting of minimum social standards. On the other hand, the DGB was highly sceptical about attempts to establish mechanisms of monetary redistribution as part of a European social policy. The transfer of resources was by and large to remain a domain of national policy. In Europe, similar ideas were seen as premature because of the 'different traditions and value systems' of national societies. In as much as there was any concept of European solidarity it was one in which cross-border redistribution of resources played a minor role – witness the DGB opposition to proposals for a European unemployment insurance. Likewise, while supporting a more active European labour market policy, the DGB warned that this should not entail large-scale subsidy programmes for poorer regions, which could diminish the financial scope for labour market programmes in the Federal Republic.⁵⁵

54 See for instance: Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund, Protokoll 9. Ordentlicher Bundeskongress, 25. bis. 30. Juni 1972, pp. 163, 202.

55 Schreiben Heinz Oskar Vetter an Bundeskanzler Brandt, 11.12.1973, AdSD, Bestand DGB, 24/2086.

A good starting point for analysing the reasons for this DGB approach is an argument put forward by Paul Teague in his work on British trade union attitudes towards European integration. Teague points out that the failure of British labour to develop any comprehensive strategy for European economic and social policies was due not only to a long-standing tendency of Euroscepticism, but also to a 'naïve Keynesianism', that is, a belief that such policies had to be implemented at the national level where over time labour had established structures and institutions to challenge the dominance of capital.⁵⁶ Notwithstanding the difference between British and German unions in terms of their general attitudes to European integration during the 1970s, the DGB's positions reflected a similar pattern of 'naïve Keynesianism' – witness, in particular, the DGB's emphasis on the coordination of national policies instead of European harmonization. In fact, the DGB's European activities themselves must at least partly be understood in terms of a national logic – aiming not so much at new European social regulation than at the creation of a more supportive European environment for the further development of domestic social policies. In the internal DGB deliberations on a European *commissariat de plan*, for example, strong emphasis was placed on the question of whether or not such a new European bureaucracy would help German trade unions to acquire more influence over domestic economic policy.⁵⁷ Likewise, the above mentioned lobbying in relation to the ECS was primarily designed to back up DGB positions in the domestic co-determination reform debate of the early 1970s. DGB representatives asked other national trade unions to support co-determination provisions in the draft ECS statute because this would help the DGB in the national context.⁵⁸ Once the lobbying of ETUC and the Commission had led to the incorporation of German-style participation in the draft directive, the DGB invoked the 'new European situation' in the domestic debate. The Commission proposal, taken together with co-determination debates in a number of countries, was portrayed as representing a European trend that confirmed the legitimacy of German union demands for an extension of *Mitbestimmung* (co-decision) in the Federal Republic.⁵⁹

Such a perspective also helps us to better understand the discrepancy between the DGB's strong insistence on representation in European institutions and the more limited interest in actual legislation. Representation served first and foremost to provide information about new European developments to national headquarters, and to lobby EC institutions with a view to opposing the negative repercussions of market integration while maximizing European support for the expansion of national social policies. Typically, in a 1979 DGB board discussion of the ETUC action programme, IG Chemie Chairman Karl Hauenschild (who became a social democratic Member of the European Parliament from 1979 to 1984) suggested skipping this point on the agenda unless the ETUC docu-

56 Paul Teague, The British TUC and the European Community, in: Millennium 18 (1989) 1, pp. 29-45, here: p. 39.

57 Aktennotiz Abteilung Wirtschaft, 5 July 1971, AdSD, Bestand DGB, 24/2163.

58 Procès-Verbal de la réunion du comité exécutif, 5 December 1968, Archive International Institute of Social History (IISH) Amsterdam, ETUC collection, part I, file 476.

59 Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund, Protokoll 10. Ordentlicher Bundeskongress, 25. bis 30. Mai 1975, p. 125.

ment contained something that could cause domestic trouble.⁶⁰ When such instances of 'trouble' did occur, the DGB representatives in Brussels could become the target of heavy criticism. This was the case in 1978, for example, when DGB leader Vetter publicly advocated the ETUC demand for a shorter working week while this issue was still contested within the German union movement.⁶¹

The more fundamental reasons for this priority accorded to the nation-state in terms of social policy are of course well known. German trade unions, as their counterparts in other West European countries, came to be accepted as 'estates of the realm' at the national level after 1945, and their new stakes in industrial relations systems and the administration of welfare programmes made them susceptible to the appeal of national identity.⁶² It is worth emphasizing in this regard, too, that the DGB's attitude towards a supranational European social policy – in substance if not in rhetoric – was not fundamentally different from that of German employers and the government.⁶³ The only serious signs of controversy between the DGB and the German employer association Bundesverband der Deutschen Industrie (BDI) were related to the European regulation of co-determination, but this was, in essence, a domestic rather than a European debate.

What this analysis demonstrates overall, then, is that it is misleading to interpret the active DGB engagement with the emerging EC social policy in the 1970s as evidence of a broader aspiration to 'counterbalance' European market integration. Indeed, the most striking continuity of German trade union thinking on European integration during this period was not the preoccupation with the dangers of 'social dumping' but the support for European free trade. The origins of this support date back at least to the union's embracing of ideas for a European customs union during the inter-war period.⁶⁴ After 1945 the belief in the benefits of free trade was reinforced in the light of the damaging effects of the protectionism of the 1930s. It is true that IG Metall expressed serious reservations about early post-war European integration in the coal and steel industries but it appears

60 Protokoll der Sitzung des Bundesvorstands des Deutschen Gewerkschaftsbundes, 3 April 1979, Übertragung aus dem Stenogramm, in: AdSD, Bestand DGB, 5/DGAI 500.

61 Protokoll der Sitzung des Bundesvorstands des Deutschen Gewerkschaftsbundes, 2 May 1978, Übertragung aus dem Stenogramm, in: AdSD, Bestand DGB, 5/DGAI 597.

62 See Pasture/Verberckmoes, Working-Class Internationalism (note 7).

63 Stephan Seifen, Die Bedeutung der europäischen Beschäftigungspolitik für den Strategiewandel der deutschen Gewerkschaften in der Phase der 'Eurosklrose' (1973–1986), in: Jürgen Mittag (ed.), Deutsche Gewerkschaften und europäische Integration im 20. Jahrhundert, Mitteilungsblatt des Instituts für soziale Bewegungen 42 (2009) 1, pp. 187–213, here: p. 195; for the attitudes of German employer associations towards European integration see Werner Bühner, Le BDI (Bundesverband der Deutschen Industrie) et les institutions européennes, in: Marie-Thérèse Bitsch (ed.), Le couple France-Allemagne et les institutions européennes, Bruxelles 2001, pp. 261–279; Wolfram Kaiser, Quo vadis, Europa? Die deutsche Wirtschaft und der gemeinsame Markt 1958–1963, in: Rudolf Hrbek/Volker Schwarz (eds.), 40 Jahre Römische Verträge: Der deutsche Beitrag, Baden-Baden 1998, pp. 195–213.

64 See Patrick Pasture, The Interwar Origins of International Labour's European Commitment (1919–1934), in: Contemporary European History 10 (2001) 2, pp. 221–237.

that this was due to the specific provisions of the Schuman Plan that were perceived to favour the French steel industry at the expense of its German counterpart.⁶⁵

Importantly, the DGB welcomed the EEC Treaty from the outset – despite the fact that the representation of trade union interests in EEC institutions was weaker in comparison to the ECSC. At its 1962 congress, the new DGB leader Ludwig Rosenberg told delegates that the Common Market had accelerated economic and social progress in West Germany.⁶⁶ As Lutz Niethammer has pointed out, this attitude reflected not least the shift towards a more pragmatic type of trade unionism inspired by US-style ‘politics of productivity’ (Charles Maier) and symbolized in the DGB’s new 1963 Düsseldorf programme, which abandoned the earlier union emphasis on state ownership and planning.⁶⁷ At the same time, the growing contribution of European exports to the Federal Republic’s ‘economic miracle’ reinforced German trade unions’ commitment to market integration. ‘Europe’, in other words, came to be perceived primarily as an economic space that helped to raise wages and expand welfare services in the Federal Republic.

This perception of European market integration as an enabling factor of domestic social progress did not fundamentally change during the 1970s, which in turn limited DGB aspirations for a supranational social policy. What appears striking in hindsight is precisely how little emphasis was put on possible negative implications of market integration – despite the oil crisis and recession in 1973–4, and the subsequent steep rise in unemployment. The debate about multinational corporations, for example, appears to have petered out within the DGB after 1974.⁶⁸ At the European level, in response to the oil crisis and recession, DGB leader Vetter helped in 1974 to bring about a series of tripartite conferences to discuss prospects for macroeconomic coordination. But the lack of concrete results and economic recovery soon reduced the salience of the initiative.⁶⁹ Clearly – against the backdrop of record union density rates and the Federal Republic’s comparatively impressive macroeconomic performance in the second half of the 1970s⁷⁰ – the DGB did not yet perceive European (and broader global) market integration as raising serious problems for West Germany’s welfare state and industrial relations institutions.

65 See Karl Lauschke, *Zwischen Mitbestimmungs- und Europapolitik: Die IG Metall und die Anfänge der europäischen Integration*, in: Jürgen Mittag (ed.), *Deutsche Gewerkschaften und europäische Integration im 20. Jahrhundert*, *Mitteilungsblatt des Instituts für soziale Bewegungen* 42 (2009) 1, pp. 89–102.

66 *Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund, Protokoll des 4. Ordentlichen Bundeskongresses*, 7. bis 12. September 1962, pp. 100 f.

67 Niethammer, *Defensive Integration* (note 6), pp. 575; for this transformation see Julia Angster, *Konsenskapitalismus und Sozialdemokratie: Die Westernisierung von SPD und DGB*, Munich 2003.

68 See Walter Braun, *Die ‘Multinationalen’ – ein inzwischen vergessenes Problem?* in: *Gewerkschaftliche Monatshefte*, 29 (1978) 6, pp. 349–54.

69 See Gobin, *Consultation* (note 9), pp. 461 ff.

70 See Sassoon, *One Hundred Years of Socialism* (note 4), chapter 18.

Conclusion

The importance of the national and international context factors discussed above is clearly borne out if we look at how German trade union's attitudes towards European integration have developed in more recent decades. In fact, these attitudes have substantially changed since the late 1980s due to domestic weakening and a much more difficult macroeconomic environment. 'Europe' has received a much higher degree of attention in German trade union thinking – witness the routine praise for the 'European social model' at DGB congresses during the 1990s.⁷¹ It also seems clear that there has equally been a shift in the evaluation of economic integration. The DGB continues to emphasize the advantages of market integration for German exports, yet there is now also a growing concern about negative effects of the EU's internal market on Germany's welfare system. This concern has been voiced, for instance, in relation to Economic and Monetary Union and, above all, Eastern enlargement. German trade union leaders have warned against the dangers of 'social dumping' in the old member states as a result of enlargement.⁷² In turn, these more ambivalent views of market integration went hand in hand with demands for a more active supranational social policy. Thus, the DGB has encouraged the European social dialogue and supported a European coordination of collective bargaining.⁷³ 'Social Europe' is also increasingly invoked as a necessary response to the acceleration of global competition – in fact, DGB leaders have explicitly framed the 'European social model' in juxtaposition to the 'American model' of liberal capitalism.⁷⁴ On the other hand, however, continuities need to be stressed, too, in particular with regard to the still dominant preference for coordination over harmonization. For example, during the 1990s, the DGB still advocated a better EU-wide coordination of national employment policies, rather than a wholesale transfer of competences to Brussels.⁷⁵ Likewise, there was still a clear emphasis on limiting the redistributive component of European initiatives. Within the framework of European wage co-ordination, for example, German unions have insisted that coordination should be based on the 'neutral' concept of unit labour costs, that is, the relation between productivity and labour costs. In practice, moreover, German trade unions have repeatedly not complied with the 'soft targets' of bargaining coordination.⁷⁶

71 See for example: Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund, Protokoll des 15. Ordentlichen Bundeskongresses, 13. bis 17. Juni 1994, pp. 110 f.

72 Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund, Protokoll des 5. Außerordentlichen Bundeskongresses, 13. bis 16. November 1996, pp. 211 f.

73 See Torsten Schulten, *Der Koordinierungsansatz des Europäischen Metallgewerkschaftsbundes*, in: Torsten Schulten/Wolfgang Bispinck (eds.), *Tarifpolitik unter dem Euro*, Hamburg 1999, pp. 197-226.

74 See Thomas Fetzer, 'Social Europe' as an Answer to Economic Globalisation: British and German Trade Unions and European Integration in the 1980s and 1990s, in: Ann-Christina Laurant Knudsen / Morten Rasmussen (eds.), *The Road to a United Europe – Interpretations of the Process of European Integration*, Brussels 2009, pp. 169-188.

75 See Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund (ed.), *Geschäftsbericht 1994–1997*, p. 16.

76 See Roland Erne, *European Unions. Labor's Quest for a Transnational Democracy*, Ithaca 2008, pp. 99 ff.

Interestingly, recent comparative scholarship suggests that a number of trade unions in other countries also experienced a 'European turn' during the 1990s,⁷⁷ which points to a possible broader significance of the German case study discussed in this article. Of course, there have been and continue to be numerous cross-national differences in trade union attitudes to European integration – the political Euroscepticism of British and Scandinavian unions, for example, never found an equivalent in Germany. In Italy and France, with their ideologically divided labour movements, European integration played a very different role, too, not least in terms of its importance for inter-union competition itself.⁷⁸ Belgium seems to be a special case.⁷⁹ Still, beyond these numerous cross-national differences one similarity stands out: until the late 1980s most trade unions' concern with European integration appears to have been predominantly related to the benefits and drawbacks of EC membership – but not yet so much to the EC as a new political arena for trade union action.

77 See Klaus Tenfelde/Jürgen Mittag (eds.), *Towards Transnational Trade Union Representation? National Trade Unions and European Integration*, Essen forthcoming 2010.

78 For Britain see Teague, *The British TUC* (note 56); for France see Jean-Marie Pernot, *Dedans, dehors. La dimension internationale dans le syndicalisme français*, Paris 2001; for Italy see Andrea Ciampani, *La Cisl tra integrazione europea e mondializzazione. Profilo storico del sindacato nuovo nelle relazioni internazionali: dalla Conferenza di Londra al trattato di Amsterdam*, Rome 2000.

79 See Patrick Pasture, 'Belgium', in: Klaus Tenfelde/Jürgen Mittag (eds.), *Towards Transnational Trade Union Representation? National Trade Unions and European Integration*, Essen forthcoming 2010.