

Europafacklig samverkan

Problem och möjligheter

Kristina Lovén Seldén



UNIVERSITY OF GOTHENBURG
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY AND WORK SCIENCE

Akademisk avhandling för filosofie doktorsexamen i sociologi vid Institutionen för sociologi och arbetsvetenskap, Göteborgs Universitet, som med tillstånd av samhällsvetenskapliga fakultetsnämnden läggs fram torsdagen den 5 juni 2014 kl.10.15 i sal Sappören, Sprängkullsgatan 25, Göteborg.

Abstract

Title: European Trade Union Cooperation: Problems and Possibilities.
Language: Swedish (Introduction, study I and IV) and English (study II and III), 226 pages.
Author: Kristina Lovén Seldén. Doctoral Dissertation at the Department of Sociology and Work Science, University of Gothenburg, Box 720 SE 40530 Gothenburg, Sweden.
ISBN: 978-91-981195-6-5

The overarching aim of this thesis is to examine the conditions for cooperation among trade unions in Europe, and to identify factors making it easier or more difficult. The dissertation centers on two crucial areas: wage determination and working-time regulation. The theoretical framework combines theories of industrial relations regimes with ideas on meta-organizations, and an approach focusing on the power resources of trade unions.

The empirical data was collected through a web survey sent by e-mail to all member organizations of the ETUC, all the ETUFs and trade unions just below the central level in 14 European countries. I also carried out interviews, made observations at trade union meetings and collected all kinds of documents. Trade unions in different countries and institutional settings were strategically selected for the interviews and the survey.

In study I, I examine the revision of the EU Working Time Directive and how European trade unions and employer organizations have responded to this revision. Study II explores trade union attitudes towards issues of future wage setting on national and European level, and in particular, their attitudes towards statutory minimum wages. In study III I address the conditions for transnational trade union cooperation in the wake of the *Laval* case, and examine whether the case is perceived to have affected European trade union relations. Study IV, finally, focuses on trade union attitudes towards a European regulation of working time and whether these attitudes are related to what industrial regime the trade unions belong to. The article also compares the trade union approach to a European working time regulation with the approach to a European regulation of minimum wage.

The analyses showed that comparative regime theory has quite large explanatory power as to various union attitudes towards certain regulations, strategies and cooperation in Europe. Whereas today there is increasing support among trade unions in Europe towards statutory minimum wages on European level, there is rejection of this solution among the Nordic unions who insist on keeping their system with negotiated wage-setting. The results can be understood with reference to differences in the domestic labour market and to the strength of the trade unions or, in other words, their membership and bargaining power. Trade unions in countries with high union density and strong collective bargaining power are inclined to preserve their current wage systems, whereas trade unions in countries with weak bargaining power are more likely to seek new ways to defend wages. However, as I argue based on the analyses, trade union attitudes towards transnational cooperation may also be issue-specific, which the case of a European working-time regulation illustrates. Although institutional differences between countries are important obstacles they cannot alone explain union cooperation or the lack of union cooperation in Europe.

Keywords: EU, industrial relations, meta-organizations, minimum wages, power resources, regime comparison, trade unions, transnational union cooperation, working time