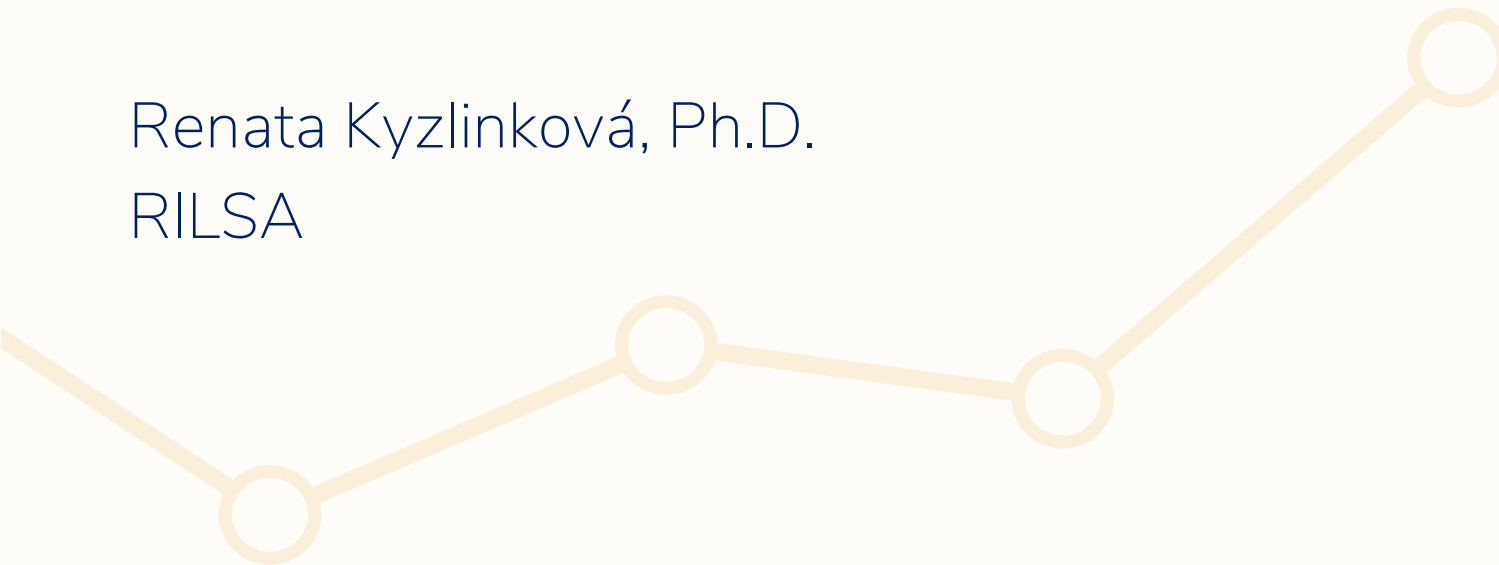


Social Dialogue in the Czech Republic

Institutional Stability under Membership Decline

Trade Union Density, Collective Bargaining Coverage and Future Challenges

Renata Kyzlinková, Ph.D.
RILSA



Social dialog levels

National Tripartite Level



- Trade unions, employers and the government meet within the tripartite body, the **Council of Economic and Social Agreement (RHSD)**.
- The RHSD does not conclude binding agreements; it has an exclusively consultative function. Its aim is to maintain social consensus on key issues of economic and social development and to preserve social peace.
- Trade union organisations and employer associations must meet **criteria of representativeness**. The members of the RHSD include two trade union confederations and two employer associations.

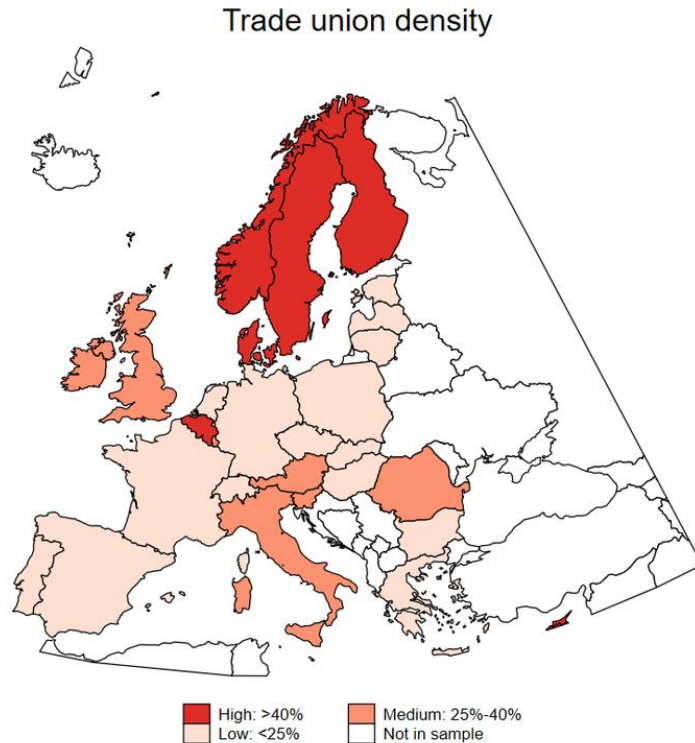
Social dialog levels



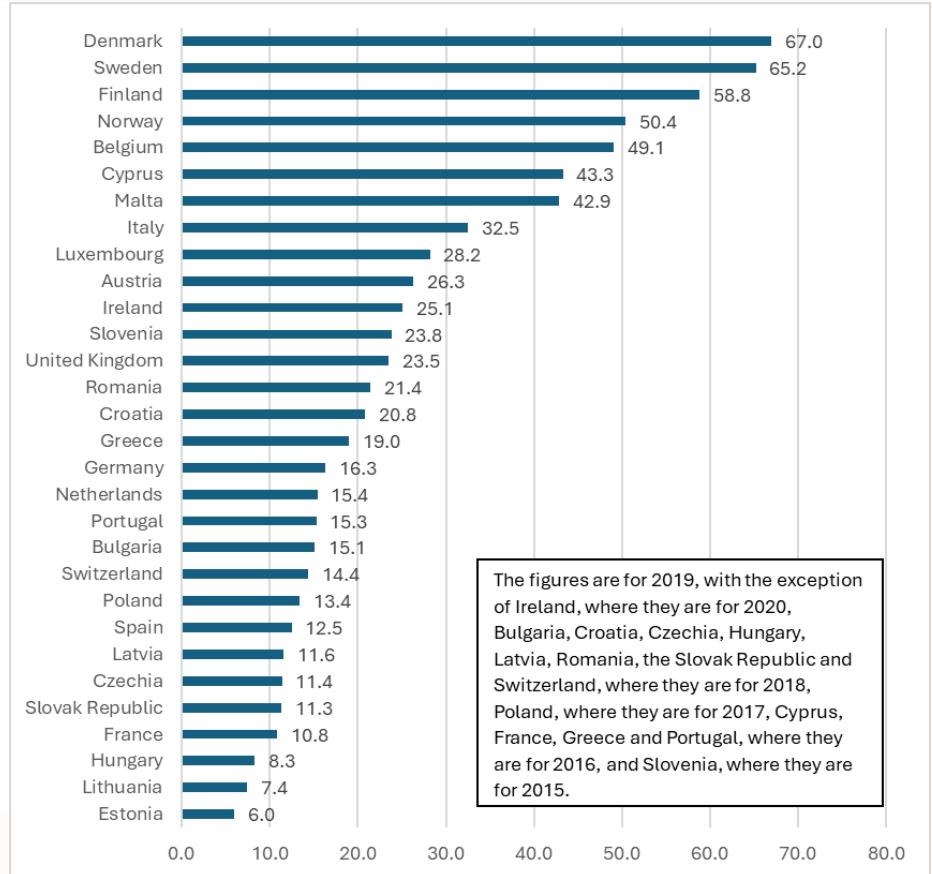
Bipartite Level

- Social dialogue between social partners at the sectoral or company level.
- In the Czech Republic, the company level is the most important.
- The main form of employee representation at the workplace is trade unions (due to historical tradition).
- Works councils are legally permitted but very rare – they have only a consultative function and do not participate in collective bargaining (with the exception of European Works Councils in multinational and transnational companies).
- Only trade unions have the right to engage in collective bargaining.
- More than one trade union organisation may operate within a single company

Trade Union Density – EU



Note: Annual average 2003-2018.
Source: OECD/ICTWSS.

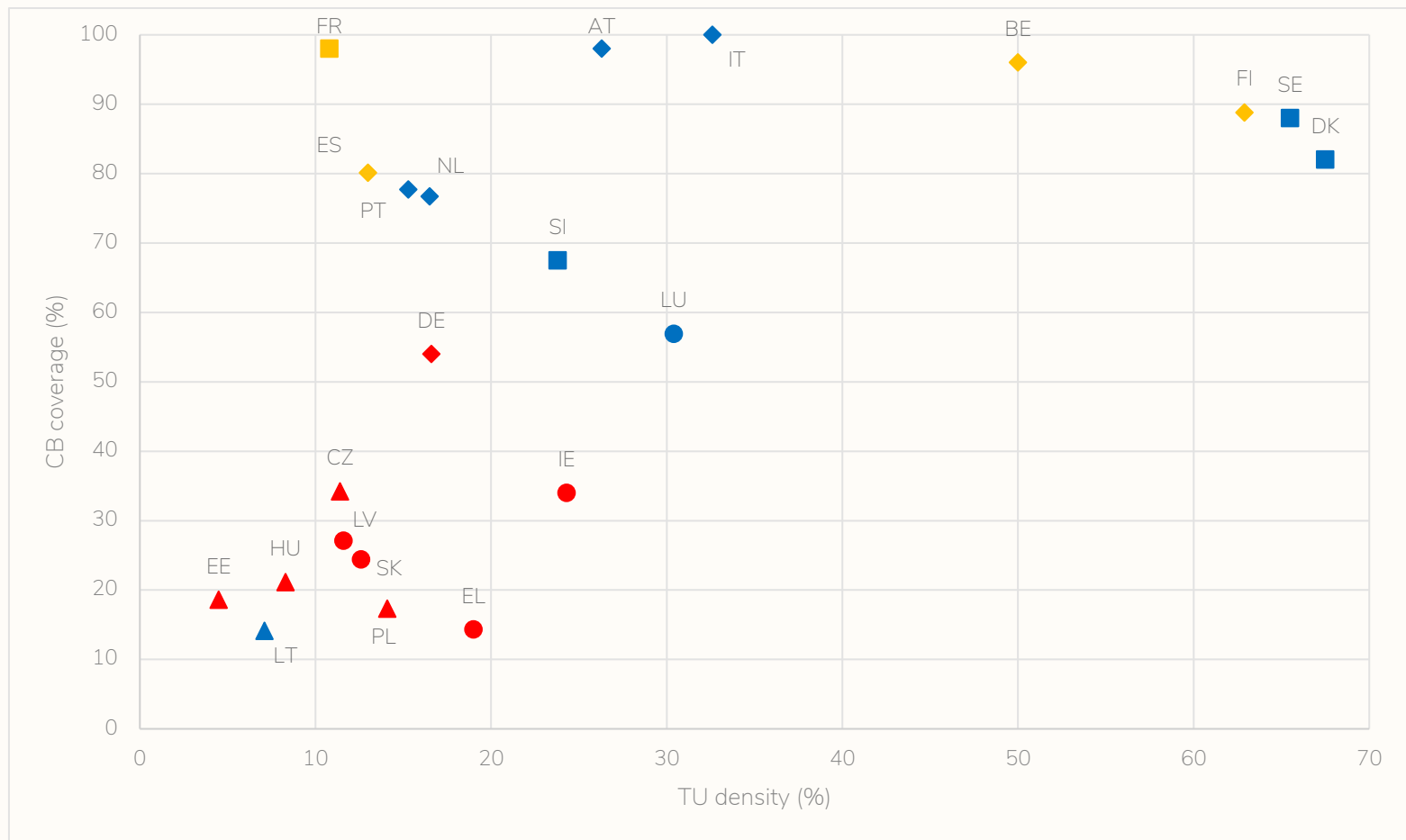


Trade Union Density Development

- Continuous decline in the share of trade union members among employees
 - OECD: from 27.2% to 9.4 % between 2000 and 2023
 - RILSA: from 32% to 14% between 2003 and 2023 (survey data)
- The average duration of membership is decreasing (from 19 to 13 years between 2003 and 2023) – half of current members joined within the last 10 years
- 10% of members occasionally consider leaving the union (2003: 15%)
- 11% of employees have at some point considered joining a trade union (2003: 18%)



Relationship between collective bargaining coverage and union density according to the prevailing level of collective bargaining in EU-27 countries.



Trade Unions at the Workplace

Almost one-third of employees reported that trade unions were present at their workplace in 2023 (48% in 2003).



In 2023, 22% of employees stated that a CLCA was concluded in their enterprise or organisation (44% in 2003).



Nearly 15% of employees in 2023 did not know whether trade unions were present at their employer (4% in 2003).

Typical Trade Union Member

- Full-time employee
- Permanent (open-ended) contract
- Longer tenure with the employer (on average 14 years)
- Large company (250+ employees)
- Public sector
- Family experience with union membership (e.g. parents)
- Rather left-wing political attitudes
- Older age

Gender and level of education do not play a role



Why Are Trade Unions Losing Their Members?

The decline in union membership 
difficult to identify universal causes

- macro-level factors such as globalisation, economic cycles, structural economic changes (e.g. the decline of traditionally unionised sectors),
- new flexible work forms, political and institutional developments, legislative changes, and digitalisation
- association of weak membership in countries without mechanisms for extending collective agreements to employer resistance and anti-union strategies, such as work organisation that promotes individualised employment relations
- unions themselves are failing to adapt to structural changes or lacking the personnel and financial capacity to recruit new members
- free-rider problem in trade union membership

How to solve decline in trade union membership?

Joining a Trade Union – Motivation

Instrumental values

(Trade unions as service organisations)



Ideological motives

(Trade unions as organisations through which individuals can manifest their values)



Recommendations for TUs strategies I.

1 Targeted Recruitment Strategy

- Focus on clearly defined groups of potential members (sector, profession, employment type)
- Expanding beyond traditional “core” employees; organisation of new categories of workers (atypical workers, platform workers, self-employed, foreigners)

2 Active and Motivated Union Representatives

- Invest in training and leadership development
- Prevent collapse of workplace organisations due to loss of key individuals

3 Data and Strategic Member Management

- Maintain detailed membership records (age, sector, profession, tenure)-evidenced based recruitment

Recommendations for TUs strategies II.

4 Attractive and Visible Member Services

- High-quality labour law counselling and legal protection
- Additional services (civil law advice, leisure support, benefits, insurance)
- Tailor made services for specific groups of workers
- Addressing the free-rider problem by emphasising exclusive member value

5 Continuous Communication and Legitimacy Building

- Constantly explain the role and importance of trade unions
- Communicate at national, sectoral and workplace level
- Activate passive but not hostile non-members

6 Diversify Union representatives

- Broaden the profile of union leaders and members

7 Introduce Cross-Generational Agendas

- Address themes resonating across age groups (job security, work-life balance, housing, digitalisation, career development)
- Combine instrumental benefits with value-based narratives

Thank you for your attention

renata.kyzlinkova@rilsa.cz

