

Chapter 18

Lithuania: Trade unions still see light at the end of the tunnel

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Independent trade unions in Lithuania came into existence in the late 1980s when the country was regaining its independence and faced numerous unfavourable conditions. Large factories, which dominated during the Soviet era, collapsed, an unrestricted free market was seen as an absolute good, and trade unions for many decades had been established in most people's minds as an element of the Soviet system.¹ The image of unions and public trust in them were also undermined by conflicts among national confederations over distribution of the assets of the former Soviet trade unions. Structural changes taking place in the economy and social life, particularly growing inequality, also hindered the development of a trade union movement: new free market 'winners' did not want and had nothing to do with unions, while 'losers' were fully occupied with surviving and not losing their jobs during the market transformations of the 1990s.

As the structure of the economy changed, with manufacturing weakening and the service sector expanding, small and micro companies gradually replaced large companies, which were more favourable for trade unions. Declining union membership was further accelerated by Lithuania's accession to the European Union (EU). With the opening of the country's borders and opportunities for cross-border mobility, many employees opted to emigrate rather than to fight for better working

¹ As there is little research on trade unions and industrial relations in Lithuania, this chapter is based primarily on interviews with union representatives, experts and researchers.

conditions. Attempts were made to compensate for low union representation among employees with a fairly strict legal framework. This did not provide the necessary protection for employees without appropriate enforcement, however. It also did a disservice to unions in that, at a time of tight regulation of employment relationships, there was nothing left to negotiate in collective agreements.

The issue of identity also prevented the trade unions from becoming strong players in the market: for many years, unions, or at least a considerable proportion of them, have identified themselves as a kind of ‘last resort’ institution, maintaining a kind of ‘bellicose’ rhetoric. In the context of improving living standards and rising educational qualifications among employees, trade unions often have little to offer or were unattractive to employees on higher earnings who were generally satisfied with their working conditions. All this is reflected in some of the indicators in Table 18.1: low union density, low collective bargaining coverage, the prevalence of company-level collective agreements, and largely non-existent strike activity. Nevertheless, despite all the unfavourable circumstances for the development of collective bargaining, there are some institutions that provide unions with a possibility to retain and even further develop a sufficiently important role in working life.

Table 18.1 Principal characteristics of trade unionism in Lithuania

| | 1995 | 2000 | 2019 |
|--|----------------------------|----------------------|---------------------|
| Total trade union membership | 400,000 | 184,000 ^b | 99,300 ^e |
| Women as a proportion of total membership | n.a. | 57 % ^d | 54 % ^f |
| Gross union density | n.a. | n.a. | n.a. |
| Net union density | 33 % | 17 % ^b | 7.4 % |
| Number of confederations | 1 ^a | 3 ^b | 3 |
| Number of affiliated unions (federations) | n.a. | 48 ^d | 61 |
| Number of independent unions | n.a. | n.a. | n.a. |
| Collective bargaining coverage | n.a. | 15 % ^c | 7 % ^f |
| Principal level of collective bargaining | Company level ^a | | |
| Days not worked due to industrial action per 1,000 workers | n.a. | 1 | 2 |

Note: Union and strike data related to the union confederations represented in the Tripartite Council of the Republic of Lithuania, and the affiliated industry-level and territorial unions of the two largest confederations. ^a1991; ^b2001; ^c2002; ^d2003; ^e2020; ^f2015.

Source: Appendix A1; Statistics Lithuania (2021).

Probably the most important institution or pillar that has supported a role for unions throughout the period since the mid-1990s and has allowed them to remain a sufficiently important player in determining working conditions is the Tripartite Council of the Republic of Lithuania (LRTT, *Lietuvos Respublikos trišalė taryba*), which was established in 1995. The LRTT is the main tripartite social dialogue institution in the country. All the most important labour market-related regulations and other decisions important for employees are discussed there. The second pillar, allowing unions to remain an important player in the social and political arena, is Lithuania's membership of the EU and the support of the European Commission (EC), the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) and other European institutions for national unions. The third pillar, which is often omitted but is nevertheless important, is the real estate managed by the main confederations, which for a long time was an important source of revenue. This ensured a degree of continuity and stability for their activities, even during periods of decreasing union membership.

These three pillars provide national and, to a certain extent, industry-level trade unions with some stability, a situation that is unlikely to change soon. In addition, it should be noted that unions do not stand still – recent developments show that:

- young people are joining;
- new ideas are emerging from within;
- unions are paying much more attention to publicizing their activities and ensuring visibility in society;
- unions are developing cooperation with NGOs;
- they are launching initiatives to protect the self-employed, platform workers and third-country nationals; and, importantly,
- they have recently greatly strengthened their position in the public sector by taking advantage of the favourable political situation.






Since 2018 national and industry-level collective agreements have been signed on a regular basis in the public sector and the number of union members has increased in this sector. All of these developments provide some reason to expect that Lithuanian trade unions might remain fairly important players and may indeed still see light at the end of the tunnel.

Historical background and principal features of the industrial relations system

The first trade union in Lithuania was established in 1892. The workers' movement of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century was generally quite well organized. During the Soviet period after 1940, unions were taken over by communists and nationalized, becoming part of the All-Union Central Council of Trade Unions (VPSCT, *Visasąjunginė profesinių sąjungų centro taryba*). In 1980, Lithuanian unions united twenty industries and had some 1,735,000 members. At the end of the 1980s, with the beginning of the National Revival in Lithuania, under the Reform Movement 'Sąjūdis', the 'Labora' club was established, which generated ideas for the renewal of trade unions. In 1989, the Trade Union Reform Movement (PSPS, *Profesinių sąjungų persitvarkymo sąjūdis*) and the Lithuanian Workers' Union (LDS, *Lietuvos darbininkų sąjunga*) were established; the latter changed its name in 2002 and became the current Lithuanian Trade Union 'Solidarumas' (LPS 'Solidarumas', *Lietuvos profesinė sąjunga 'Solidarumas'*) (Glovackas 2007 – see Figure 18.1).

After the restoration of Lithuanian independence, on 11 March 1990, a congress of Lithuanian trade unions took place, which established the Lithuanian Free Trade Union Confederation (LLPSK, *Lietuvos laisvųjų profesinių sąjungų konfederacija*) on the basis of the unions of the former Soviet Lithuania. The LLPSK inherited all rights of the former Soviet trade unions. Later, the Lithuanian Trade Union Centre (LPSC, *Lietuvos profesinių sąjungų centras*) was set up, based on this organization. Dissatisfied with the slow reform and the 'Soviet' past, some unions did not join this confederation and founded another, the Lithuanian Trade Union Unification (LPSS, *Lietuvos profesinių sąjungų susivienijimas*), in February 1992. These two organizations, the LPSC and LPSS, merged in 2002 to become the current Lithuanian Trade Union Confederation (LPSK, *Lietuvos profesinių sąjungų konfederacija*) (Glovackas 2007). The Lithuanian Labour Federation (LDF, *Lietuvos darbo federacija*), which was set up in 1919, was also re-established at the end of 1991. After long being the 'third most important' confederation of independent Lithuania, it has shrunk considerably and to some extent suspended its activities in recent years (see Figure 18.1).

Figure 18.1 Comparing trade union organizations in Lithuania, 2000 and 2020

| | | |
|--|---|--|
| Lithuanian Trade Union Centre, formerly Lithuanian Free Trade Union Confederation, est. 1990 |  | Lithuanian Trade Union Confederation (LPSK) |
| Lithuanian Trade Union Unification, est. 1992 | | |
| Lithuanian Workers' Union, est. 1989 |  | Lithuanian Trade Union 'Solidarumas' (LPS 'Solidarumas') |
| Lithuanian Labour Federation, est. 1919, restored 1991 |  | Lithuanian Labour Federation (LDF) |
| Lithuanian Trade Union 'Sandrauga', est. 1999 |  | Lithuanian Trade Union 'Sandrauga' (LPS 'Sandrauga') |
| Various independent trade unions, est. 1990–2000 |  | Various independent trade unions |
| | | General Trade Union of the Republic of Lithuania (RJPS), est. 2002 |
| | | Various independent trade unions |
| 2000 | | 2020 |

Source: Author's elaboration.

Disagreements between the confederations and their affiliates over the property of the former Soviet trade unions caused much long-term damage to the modern union movement. Quarrels resulted largely from inconsistent policy decisions on the use and redistribution of this property. Eventually, however, unions began to collaborate with each other, to support each other's initiatives and to coordinate positions. They thus turned from confrontational into relatively united and mutually supportive organizations. A major contributory factor in the increasing union collaboration was the establishment of the LRTT in 1995.

Structure of trade unions and union democracy

Nine criteria define the trade union confederations represented in the Tripartite Council. Among them are membership of international organizations, having members or representatives in different regions or industries, being active for at least three years and organizing at least 0.5 per cent of the workforce. In 2021 three confederations were considered representative according to the criteria defined in the Labour Code (DK, *Lietuvos Respublikos Darbo kodeksas*): the LPSK, LPS ‘Solidarumas’ and the Lithuanian Trade Union ‘Sandrauga’ (LPS ‘Sandrauga’, *Lietuvos profesinė sąjunga ‘Sandrauga’*). The LPSK and the LPS ‘Solidarumas’ are the main confederations.² LPSK represents around 50,000 members (approximately 4 per cent of employees) and unites twenty-five industry-level unions today (LPSK 2021). LPS ‘Solidarumas’ represents around 20,000 members or approximately 1.5 per cent of Lithuanian employees and unites fifteen industry-level and twenty-one territorial affiliates (Solidarumas 2021). One more, smaller national trade union organization is the Lithuanian Trade Union ‘Sandrauga’ (LPS ‘Sandrauga’, *Lietuvos profesinė sąjunga ‘Sandrauga’*), which was also represented in the LRTT until mid-2022. There is no reliable information about its membership, finances and structure. According to LPS ‘Sandrauga’ own reporting, this confederation provides free labour law consultations for its members, represents them in labour dispute commissions and courts, drafts collective agreements, and participates in collective bargaining (Sandrauga 2021).

Both the LPSK and the LPS ‘Solidarumas’ operate on a confederal basis; that is, they bring together industry-level trade unions, and in the case of LPS ‘Solidarumas’, territorial union organizations. The affiliates at industry-level and territorial unions are company-level trade unions. The LPSK incorporates a Women’s Centre and a youth section, LPSK Youth. The mission of the LPSK is to recruit and protect Lithuanian employees and influence government institutions on labour and social issues. LPSK’s largest industry-level affiliated unions are the Lithuanian

² As there have been no studies or research carried out in Lithuania on the country’s trade unions, and the unions themselves often provide little publicly available information about their activities, internal structure, and other issues, this chapter focuses mainly on the two main confederations. Other union organisations are mentioned as far as possible.

Education and Science Trade Union (LŠMPS, *Lietuvos švietimo ir mokslo profesinė sąjunga*), the Lithuanian Nurses' Organization (LSSO, *Lietuvos slaugos specialistų organizacija*) and the Lithuanian Federation of Industrial Trade Unions (LPPSE, *Lietuvos pramonės profesinių sąjungų federacija*). LPS 'Solidarumas' also has a Women's Council and a youth structure, the Youth Group.

The union confederations' governing bodies are the congress (*suvažiavimas*), the council (*taryba*) and the management board (*valdyba*). Congresses are convened every four years. The council is a collegiate body that functions between congresses; meetings of the council are normally convened at least twice a year. Activities of the confederation between congresses and meetings of the council are organized by the management board. Management board meetings are usually convened at least once a month; the majority of the management board consists of the chairs of confederation affiliates: that is, the industry-level or territorial unions, or both. In addition to the collegiate governing bodies, the confederation has a chair; the LPSK also has a secretary-general. Thus, primary day-to-day management of the confederation is carried out by the chair and the management board, which deal with all day-to-day issues and take various ad hoc decisions (LPSK 2018; Solidarumas 2018).

Since 2002 one other national union confederation has been operating in Lithuania, the General Trade Union of the Republic of Lithuania (RJPS, *Respublikinė jungtinė profesinė sąjunga*). At the beginning of 2021 two previously independent industry-level unions affiliated to the RJPS: the Lithuanian Education Employees Trade Union (LŠDPS, *Lietuvos švietimo darbuotojų profesinė sąjunga*) and the National Unification of Officials Trade Unions (NPPSS, *Nacionalinis pareigūnų profesinių sąjungų susivienijimas*). The affiliation of these relatively large unions and RJPS's decision to become a member of the European Confederation of Independent Trade Unions (CESI, *Confédération Européenne des Syndicats Indépendants*) – not, properly speaking, a union confederation at the European level – enabled the RJPS to meet the established representativeness criteria. Since 1 July 2022 it has been a member of the LRTT.

There are a few other national and industry-level union organizations, not affiliated to the aforementioned peak-level confederations. The LDF is one of the oldest unions in Lithuania, and for a long time was the third most important union confederation, with representatives on the LRTT. Since mid-2010, its activities have declined significantly, however,

as its membership has decreased. The union no longer meets the representativeness criteria and may no longer delegate members to the LRTT. Currently, LDF claims about 4,500 members. The 1 May Trade Union (GIPS, *Gegužės 1-osios profesinė sąjunga*) is small, comprising only a few hundred members, but it is active in the area of platform work. The Union of Lithuanian Doctors (LGS, *Lietuvos gydytojų sąjunga*) is large, uniting about 70 per cent of Lithuanian physicians and having about 7,000 members in industry-level trade unions. It is not affiliated to any national trade union confederation.

Affiliates of the confederations are duly registered industry-level or territorial unions that accept the statutes of the confederations and pursue goals and activities that do not contradict them. An organization may become a member of the LPSK if it meets certain requirements and has at least 1,000 members (LPSK 2018). An industry-level or territorial union may join LPS 'Solidarumas' if it has at least 100 members (Solidarumas 2018). Affiliated unions have the right to make demands or requests, submit proposals to the bodies of the confederation, ask confederal representatives questions and receive answers, participate in the adoption and implementation of resolutions at confederal level, receive information on confederation activities, and have access to its funds and assets. Affiliates may also participate in and support campaigns, rallies, pickets and strikes organized by the confederation.

In general, affiliated unions are required to respect resolutions of the congress, the council and the management board, as well as to pay fixed membership fees and other contributions, and to actively participate in the confederation's activities. Industry-level unions may exercise discretion within their industry; they usually have their own chairs and governing bodies, such as presidiums (*prezidiumas*), management boards or councils, as well as industry-level union congresses. Industry-level unions are completely autonomous; they are independent in making all decisions about their activities. Breakaways and mergers with other industry-level unions may be concluded without any interference from the confederation. Upon joining the confederation, industry-level unions undertake to stick to its statutes. The relationships between individual industrial-level unions are also different. As a rule, unions operating in the public sector cooperate more with each other, for example by coordinating their positions in signing a national collective agreement in the public sector, while industry-level unions in the private sector are more diverse and often operate more independently.

Industry-level and territorial unions comprise mainly company-level unions. The relationships between industry-level and company-level unions are diverse in both principal confederations. Some trade unions, such as the Lithuanian Trade Union of Food Producers (LMPS, *Lietuvos maistinininkų profesinė sąjunga*), are more centralized and have strong working relationships and cooperation with the company-level unions. For example, LMPS (the industry-level union) is directly involved in company-level collective bargaining. There are also cases in which industry-level unions admit members directly to the industry-level and the company-level unions are only subdivisions of the industry-level union. Other industry-level unions are more decentralized and less involved in collective bargaining at company level. It is difficult to estimate the proportion of trade unions operating with these different relationships to industry-level unions in Lithuania, but it is likely that the majority are less centralized unions. If company-level unions need support in preparations or participation in collective bargaining, however, in most cases this is provided by industry-level or even confederation lawyers or other professionals. On the other hand, there are also very strong unions operating at company level in chemicals and oil, which have adequate teams of lawyers or other professionals.

According to the current DK, a company-level union can be set up if it has at least twenty members or its members account for at least 10 per cent of the total employees of the company, provided this is equivalent to three or more employees. Unionists have the right to join or set up an industry-level or territorial union, if there at least five company-level unions are involved. Industry-level and territorial unions may join national-level union organizations. There is no distinction between white-collar and blue-collar workers. Accordingly, unions claim to have no specific strategies for attracting members from different categories of employees. Normally, unions operating in companies unite all employees working there, while upper-level unions unite at the territorial or industry-level/branch level. In fact, no unions unite employees based on their occupational affiliation, the only exception being health care, in which there are some instances of different unions for doctors and nurses.

Unionization

Although Lithuanian law lays down that Lithuanian nationals with both working and legal capacity may become members of a trade union,

there are only a few retired people, students or unemployed persons among union members, not to mention immigrants (Interviews, 2020). Data on union members are generally very scarce, however – there is actually no mechanism for verifying membership figures provided by the national unions. Furthermore, membership structure has always been dominated by the public sector; this trend is likely to continue and grow in the near future. Given that employment in the public sector has traditionally been dominated by women in Lithuania, their membership rates have usually been somewhat higher than those of men. Overall, trade union membership is decreasing, with union density falling from approximately 15 per cent in 2000 to approximately 8 per cent in 2020. After Lithuania's declaration of independence, trade unions lost a critical mass of members by 2000. This dramatic decline was mainly the result of economic restructuring, the fundamentally changed role of unions, their fragmentation, inter-union competition, and other processes taking place in the transition period, which were common to many post-Soviet countries. Although unions generally have seen a decline in membership in recent decades, the period between 2000 and 2020 can be divided into two sub-periods: 2000 to 2010, which was characterized by a steep decline in membership, and the period since 2010, marked by relative stability in membership.

During the period from 2000 to 2010 trade union membership continued to decline steadily, albeit at an increasingly slower pace. Overall, membership almost halved over this decade, from approximately 180,000 to 90,000. This decline was to some extent determined by large-scale emigration, which began after Lithuania's accession to the EU in 2004. In 2004–2006 annual net migration in Lithuania almost doubled compared with the pre-accession period. At the same time, unions lost approximately one-quarter of their members, falling from 158,000 in 2003 to 116,000 in 2006. The 2008–2009 financial and economic crisis also had a severe impact on union membership, although with a time lag.³ Although there was a slight increase in membership in the crisis years, it fell by an annual average of 4–5 percentage points in 2010–2013.

The decade 2011–2020 can be considered a period of stabilization in union membership. This relative stability went together with relatively

³ The crisis hit Lithuania particularly hard: GDP, for example, fell by 15 per cent in 2009.

significant internal changes in union membership in the main confederations: some unionized industries grew; unions organizing in education, health care, social work, journalists and transport joined the confederations; other unions shrank or left the confederations (water transport, railways), and others merged (chemical and energy industry-level unions, education industry-level unions). Despite some internal changes, the total number of union members during this period fluctuated around 90,000 (Statistics Lithuania, 2021), and even increased at the end. This increase was probably influenced by industry and national collective bargaining in the public sector, which has intensified since 2018, encouraging more employees to join unions. A modest increase in membership and density was registered by Statistics Lithuania (SD, *Statistikos departamentas*) in 2019–2020. From the interviews with national trade union confederations, they expected that this increase will continue.

Union confederations posit increasing membership as one of their most important goals. They use various strategies and actions to achieve this goal. One of the most important strategies is union awareness raising through participation in various debates, actions, mass media and social media. This strategy has been of particular importance for LPSK since 2018, with the launch of various ‘social events’. For instance, in recent years, LPSK representatives have travelled throughout the country with a ‘tent’, which is usually set up in the central squares of cities or towns, providing information to all interested persons on workers’ rights, various issues related to work organization, working hours, and other labour law issues. They also organize career aptitude tests in the form of games, and run children’s zones. Affiliated unions have also organized a number of campaigns and marches, and actively participated in various festivals, exhibitions, fairs, TV and radio programmes, and in social media. These activities are particularly focused on regional work and cooperation with NGOs and local media. Another direction is work with young people: unions hold meetings for young people, at which they present them with information about union activities and their labour rights. The main idea behind these events is not directly to persuade people to join unions, but to raise their visibility and public awareness of where to look for help in case of violations of their rights or other work-related problems.

In order to support employees and attract more members, LPS ‘Solidarumas’ often focuses on large, relatively low-wage industries, for example, retail workers in the private sector or nurses and social workers in the public sector, as well as industries undergoing restructuring, such

as forestry, energy or road transport. Also, worth highlighting are activities of LPS ‘Solidarumas’ directed towards atypical employees, including third-country nationals such as long-distance drivers or self-employed tourist guides. Such activities contribute to improving the working conditions of these workers, but also the public visibility of the confederation. To attract more members from certain industries, especially workers who are more difficult to reach – for example, in retail, trade, carriers or truck drivers – and to be more efficient, LPS ‘Solidarumas’ often starts by admitting members directly to industry-level unions. Then it tries to identify industry-specific problems, enters into discussions with industry-level employers’ organizations, and only then goes to companies and organizations with specific proposals on how the union could help to solve problems relevant to employees and improve working conditions, thus promoting the establishment of company-level unions. This approach is also used by other confederations.

In contrast to the confederal level, rather than attracting new members, industry-level union strategies and policies are focused more on retaining existing members, providing them with assistance, information and consultation, and on solving problems relevant to members in the industry. In pursuit of these objectives, unions often have their own experts to assist company-level unions in collective bargaining and drafting collective agreements, as well as to represent their members in labour dispute commissions (DGK, *darbo ginčų komisijos*) and courts. Nevertheless, there are also some examples of trade union strategies aimed at attracting new members, organizing and servicing direct membership in industry-level unions, and also ‘invisible’ or secret membership: the latter means that membership fees are paid by employees directly to the union to make it easier to penetrate certain companies, to facilitate the establishment of new company-level unions or simply to protect their members from unfavourable treatment by employers.

Freelancers and self-employed persons – for example journalists, platform workers or self-employed tour guides – account for a very small share of union members. This is partly because of the low union density in Lithuania. There are many non-unionized large, ‘traditional’ industries in which there are large numbers of non-unionized ‘typical’ employees. Unions are more focused on such industries or employees than on more difficult, ‘atypical’ industries and employees. On the other hand, these days there are some more active initiatives or attempts to join or seek help from unions on the part of ‘atypical’ employees. The largest union

confederation, the LPSK, has for several years been considering the establishment of a kind of 'virtual union' which could be joined by members working in any industry or under any type of contract. This would include 'atypical' employees as well.

US-style organizing is not widespread in Lithuania. Industry-level unions usually have a very limited number of staff, who, as a rule, work for existing members rather than on recruiting new members. Some industry-level unions (LMPS, Lithuanian Federation of Forest and Wood Workers Trade Unions; LMPF, *Lietuvos miško ir miško pramonės darbuotojų profesinių sąjungų federacija*) have participated in the Baltic Organizing Academy (BOA) framework since the beginning of the 2010s to learn from the experiences of unions in Nordic countries. No significant breakthrough has been achieved in this area, however. The provision of services by unions as a strategy for attracting and retaining new members is also not common in Lithuania. There is no research on why trade union activity is low in the area of organizing or servicing, or both. It can be assumed that reasons include the absence of traditions and knowledge, as well as trade unions' low human and financial capacities.

Only a few examples of such union services can be identified, such as a qualification improvement system for union members and non-members, implemented by the Lithuanian Nurses' Organization or the social initiative 'Stop Poverty' carried out by LPS 'Solidarumas', involving union assistance for unemployed persons from disadvantaged groups searching for work in some regions. There are still some union leisure services that were 'popular' in the Soviet era, when union members enjoy preferential access to union-owned leisure facilities, for example at the seaside. Unions traditionally pay much attention to training for their members. Many stronger industrial unions organize training and educational events for members on computer literacy, labour law or negotiation. In most cases union members receive benefits at company level: unions operating in larger companies negotiate with employers on various advantages, such as payment for additional health care or other services. These negotiated benefits are usually available for all employees of the company, irrespective of union membership. Lately, however, negotiated benefits have increasingly been available only for union members.

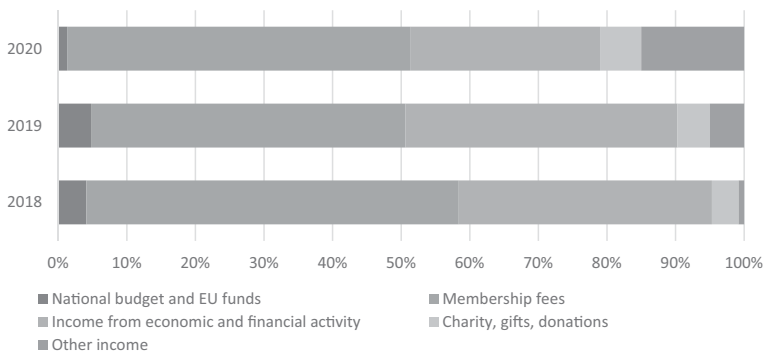
In addition, unions understand that the labour market and jobs are changing and will continue to change. Therefore, unions need to prepare for and be open to these changes. These new forms of work will involve more and more activities and economic segments. There will also be a

move to smaller and medium-sized sites from large sites, which is associated with transference from well-regulated employment relationships to weakly regulated civil relations. Being well aware of the inevitability of all this, unions at the same time strongly emphasize the need for joint European actions and initiatives in new and ever-changing conditions.

Union resources and expenditure

In Lithuania, as in many other post-Soviet countries, the main trade union confederations inherited real estate, which is now leased out and makes up a part of confederal income, in addition to membership fees. Such assets are at the disposal of the two main confederations, LPSK and LPS ‘Solidarumas’. Furthermore, the share of membership fees for the two main confederations ranges from 0.10 euros (€) to €0.50 per member per month and amounts to only a modest share of revenue. Figure 18.2 shows the average income of all Lithuanian unions possessing or not possessing real estate. On average, membership fees amount to approximately 50 per cent of union revenues. At the same time, this share varies greatly both between the confederations and between unions at different levels within the confederations. Other confederations, such as LPS ‘Sandrauga’ or RJPS, did not inherit real estate, however, and therefore they claim that their main source of income is membership fees.

Figure 18.2 Revenues of Lithuanian trade unions, 2018–2020



Source: Statistics Lithuania, 2021.

In addition, it is worth mentioning here the option available in Lithuania whereby once a year any resident of the country can transfer 0.6 per cent of their personal income tax liability to a union. This provides unions with additional income and thus strengthens their activities. Such transfers, however, do not represent a significant source of union revenues, less than 4–6 per cent (Figure 18.2). It should be stressed that membership fees are not the main source of revenues for LPSK and LPS ‘Solidarumas’, which to some extent makes them less dependent on membership fluctuations. They are still intent on boosting membership, however.

As confederations are not rich either in members or financial resources, staff numbers are also modest. According to the available information, at the end of 2020, the LPSK had seventeen employees and LPS ‘Solidarumas’ had twelve; these figures include both office and technical staff. The number of staff in industry-level unions is even lower: most industry-level unions declare only one or two employees.⁴ There are larger industrial unions with more employees; the LŠMPS, for example, had ten staff members at the end of 2020. As a rule, national confederations have a president, vice-president(s), general secretary, public relations officer, international relations officer, lawyer, project manager, administrator and accountant. The staff of industry-level unions usually comprises a president and, in some cases, a vice-president(s) and an accountant. Some larger industry-level unions, for example the LŠMPS, also have lawyers among their staff. Trade unions based in some large enterprises, such as Achema and Orlen Lietuva, have lawyers as well.

Although there is no publicly available information on the structure of confederations and unions at different levels, interviews with union representatives suggest that, traditionally, union members pay between 0.8 and 1 per cent of their net wages to company-level unions. Some industrial unions, such as LSSO, have set a flat-rate membership fee, independent of their members’ wages. As a rule, most of the membership fee remains within the company-level union. Although there is no reliable information, it can be assumed that about 70 per cent of income from members remains with the company-level union. In addition, sometimes company-level unions manage to have it stipulated in collective agreements that additional funds be allocated for union activities, but as a

⁴ See www.rekvizitai.lt

rule it is a very small amount, usually defined as a 'collective agreement administration fee'. It may be used for team building or similar activities at company level.

Union membership fees are usually transferred monthly by the company to the company union, or to the account of the industry-level union in industries in which company-level unions are not legal entities. There are also cases in which employees do not want the employer to know that they are union members, and so they pay their monthly fees directly. The share of funds transferred to industrial unions varies from one industry to another: often companies/enterprises transfer 25–30 per cent of collected membership fees to the industrial union. There are also more centralized industrial unions, usually those whose members join directly to industry-level unions. In this case, the industry level usually receives the whole membership fee.

The new Labour Code (DK) that came into effect in Lithuania on 1 July 2017 introduced, among other things, a provision on the application of collective agreements. Since the implementation of the new Labour Code collective agreements apply only to members of signatory unions, instead to all of the employees of the company. If trade union and employer agree on the application of an agreement to the whole workforce, this has to be approved by the general meeting of all employees. In practice, company-level collective agreements still more often apply to all employees of the company than to union members only, though the latter practice is also expanding. National collective agreements and several industry-level collective agreements that came into force in the public sector in 2018–2020, provided additional benefits for union members: additional holidays, extra days off for study and even more favourable pay conditions for union members. Although this practice has been widely used in the public sector in recent years, collective agreements have already appeared in the private sector with similar benefits for union members. According to the unions, these benefits have proved to be important for employees, and there has been a recent upsurge among public sector employees seeking union membership.

Regarding member benefits and services, mention should also be made of legal services, advice and representation of members before labour dispute commissions and courts, which are regularly provided to members by both industry-level and national unions. These unions provide, as far as possible, all legal and advisory services both to company-level unions and

individual union members. Services for company-level unions include assistance in setting up and registering a union; advice and assistance in preparing for and participating in collective bargaining; drafting collective agreements; and support for unions during company restructuring or collective labour disputes. Services for individual members include legal advice on various employment issues, assistance in drawing up documents and representation before labour dispute commissions or courts. Certain social guarantees or advantages for unions and their members are also provided in some company-level collective agreements. These include extra days off for union members, free paid time-off to attend union events, and employer funding for union activities or collective agreement administration.

Collective bargaining and unions at the workplace

According to the 2017 Labour Code (DK), the rights to initiate collective bargaining for the conclusion or amendment of collective agreements, to participate in it, and to conclude collective agreements are assigned to employers, employers' organizations and trade unions. Employees may be represented in collective bargaining only by trade unions. Usually, company-level unions are affiliated to industry unions; they are allowed to engage in collective bargaining and to conclude collective agreements, while the main function of works councils is information and consultation.

Collective agreements can be concluded at the following five levels: national or cross-industry; territorial; industrial, including production, services and professions; employer or company; and workplace or plant. Information on collective agreements and their supplements concluded in 2018–2020 is provided in Table 18.2. At the end of 2019, 15 per cent of employees were covered by valid collective agreements, the majority of them in the public sector (MSSL 2019). This share should be assessed bearing in mind that not all collective agreements cover remuneration issues; some of them are declarative in nature and their contents primarily repeat the existing legal norms (Blažienė et al 2019: 377; Research Council 2015; ESTEP 2016). One of the reasons for this situation is the fairly strict regulation of all main employment and working conditions, including remuneration issues, by national legislation; thus, there is little room for manoeuvre for collective bargaining in the public sector.

Table 18.2 Number of collective agreements and their supplements, 2018–2020

| | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 |
|--|------|------|------|
| National (public sector)-level collective agreements | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Industry-level collective agreements | 4 | 6 | 2 |
| Territorial-level collective agreements | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| Company-level collective agreements | 84 | 154 | 48 |

Source: MSSL (2021).

Although collective bargaining coverage is generally low, collective bargaining and collective agreements are usually in place in companies with unionized workers. According to representatives of LPSK, about 95 per cent of companies with active unions affiliated to the LPSK have collective bargaining. Company-level bargaining usually takes place in the public sector or related industries, such as education, health care, railways, culture, forestry, post and energy, and in large and medium-sized, more often multinational, private sector companies in food, alcohol, tobacco and other manufacturing. Parties to a company- or workplace-level collective agreement are the company-level union and the employer. In cases where more than one union operates at an enterprise, the enterprise's collective agreement may be concluded by a union and employer or by a joint union representation and the employer. If employees of the company are represented by the industry-level union, a company-level collective agreement might be concluded by the employer and industry-level union.

Although the company level remains the main collective bargaining level, a number of national and industry-level collective agreements were signed in the public sector in 2018–2020, incorporating some remuneration issues, among other things. These are national public sector collective agreements, alongside industry-level collective agreements in education, health care, civil service, social work and some other sectors. In most of the latter agreements there are provisions on additional rest/holiday days and/or better remuneration conditions, applicable only to union members of the signatory parties. This practice began with the introduction of the Labour Code that came into effect on 1 July 2017. The Labour Code introduced, among other things, fairly radical amendments to the provisions regulating industrial relations, including collective bargaining.

From 1 July onwards, the right to conduct collective bargaining is granted exclusively to unions, instead of unions and works councils, as in the old version of the Labour Code, and collective agreements apply only to members of signatory unions, unless agreed otherwise.

Since 2018 unions have increasingly used the opportunity provided by the Labour Code to establish more favourable working or remuneration conditions for their members. As this practice is relatively new, no specific impact assessments have yet been carried out. According to union representatives, the application of better remuneration and working conditions to union members yields positive results, as it helps to attract more members. Moreover, according to the unions, the practice of agreeing additional benefits for union members has been adopted not only by public sector institutions, but also by state and private sector companies.

Parties involved in collective bargaining at any level must comply with the favourability principle, which means that the working conditions guaranteed by law are the minimum permissible, but collective or individual subjects can agree additional guarantees and conditions that are more favourable to employees. To comply with the new Labour Code, no collective agreement, or any other local regulations on working conditions are considered valid if they put employees in a worse position than defined by the Labour Code, laws and other regulations. This means that not only the Labour Code and laws take precedence over collective agreements, but also resolutions of the government and regulations adopted by other national and municipal authorities (Blažienė et al. 2019).

In 2019–2020, about 70 per cent of collective agreements were signed in the public sector, and the rest in the private sector (MSSL 2019; MSSL 2021). The largest number of agreements were signed in education; other industries with high numbers of collective agreements are transport, social work and social care, water supply, health care, local government, and cultural organizations (mainly libraries). The main features of collective agreements are as follows:

- about half of agreements have been concluded for a term of four years, but there are a number of open-ended contracts, representing about one-quarter of all agreements;
- remuneration systems or certain remuneration provisions are established or mentioned in approximately 75 per cent of agreements;

- approximately 35 per cent of agreements contain provisions related to working arrangements, such as on-call time, individual working time, and flexible working hours;
- 25 per cent of collective agreements provide for overtime other than that set by the Labour Code; it is generally agreed that overtime should not exceed 200–280 hours per year;
- about 27 per cent of collective agreements contain provisions on the forms of work organization; teleworking, partial work and part-time work (MSSL 2019).

To sum up, there is still a lack of original qualitative provisions in collective agreements, for example on gender equality, stress and psychological violence in the work environment. References to the Labour Code are still very common; many agreements simply state that certain issues shall be settled in accordance with it.

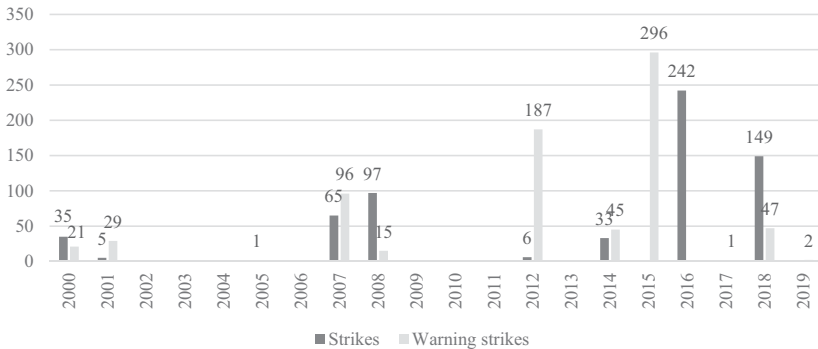
Although collective bargaining coverage in the public sector has been increasing, in the private sector it remains low. Among the reasons for this is an incongruity between the respective structures of unions and employers' associations at the industrial level that to some extent prevents the parties from engaging in collective bargaining. Moreover, even with numerous organizations and associations representing the interests of employers in Lithuania – including six participating in social dialogue at the national level – employers' associations have been reluctant to take up the role of social partners or sign collective agreements, or claim that they do not have a mandate from their members to do so (Blažienė and Gruzevskis 2017).

There is no information on unions at the workplace in Lithuania. According to the Labour Code, works councils must be established when the employer's average number of employees is twenty or more, except where trade union operating at the workplace unite more than one-third of employees. Not all companies comply with this, however. According to the European Company Survey (Eurofound 2019a), the presence of a recognized body for employee representation in Lithuania is recorded in 44 per cent of establishments with ten or more employees; presumably this figure covers both the presence of a trade union and/or a works council at the establishment. The highest share of establishments with a recognized body for employee representation in 2019 was recorded in the industry sector, at 57 per cent, the lowest being in transport, at 29 per cent.

Industrial conflict

The right of employees to strike is put into law in the Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania. Before 2017, the right to call a strike was also given to works councils. Works councils, however, never initiated a single strike. Since the Labour Code of 2017, the right to call a strike has been granted only to unions. According to the Code, a strike is a stoppage of work by employees organized by a trade union to resolve a collective labour dispute on interests or to ensure compliance with a decision reached in resolving such a dispute. Two types of strike action are distinguished, based on duration. A warning strike is defined as a strike that lasts no more than two hours. A ‘genuine strike’ has no restrictions on duration.

Figure 18.3 Number of strikes and warning strikes, 2000–2019



Source: Statistics Lithuania, 2020.

Figure 18.3 shows that strikes are rare in Lithuania, and if they occur, they are quite often warning strikes. Strikes are overwhelmingly held in education (more than 90 per cent). Strike dynamics are thus basically determined by collective bargaining developments in education; other strikes have been reported in transport and health care. There have been no strikes in other industries. According to unions, this situation is largely the result of the legal regulation of strikes, which is still restrictive, especially if valid collective agreements are in place. Several unfavourable precedents for unions and strike developments are also recorded. These involve cases in which employers went to court over the initiation

of strikes and the court imposed provisional safeguards and suspended or postponed the strike or declared it illegal. Probably the most famous cases, with litigation lasting for several years, were the strikes held by the employees of UAB 'Švyturys-Utenos alus' and UAB 'Vilniaus viešasis transportas'. The limited spread of strikes can also be explained by the absence of a tradition of striking, limited union financial resources and the lack of strike funds. Few unions have a strike fund. The educational union, LŠMPS, for example, collects special strike fund fees from its members. If a strike is successful from the union perspective, an 'agreement to end the strike' may provide that the employer shall pay wages to the employees for the days of the strike.

The decision to call a strike at the company level requires approval by at least one-quarter of all union members. Calling a strike in an industry requires a relevant decision from the industry-level union. The employer or employers' association and the relevant member companies must be given written notice at least three working days before the beginning of a warning strike or at least five working days before the beginning of a full strike. Written notice of the beginning of an upcoming warning or full strike in enterprises or industries that provide 'urgent or vital services' to the public must be given to the employer or employers' association and the individual member companies at least ten working days in advance by sending them the decision of the union or union organization to declare the strike.

The following services are considered vital to the public: health care, electric power supply, water supply, heat and gas supply, sewage and waste disposal, civil aviation (including air traffic control), telecommunications, railway and urban public transport. In addition, the right to call a strike of emergency medical service employees and other employees (professional soldiers; police, customs, state boarder guard service officers; and judges) is limited by laws that prohibit them from calling a strike. The demands put forward by these employees are settled by bodies for the resolution of collective labour disputes on interests. While a collective agreement remains valid employees are prohibited from calling a strike regarding the requirements or terms of employment regulated in this agreement, if these terms are being adhered to. The latter restriction does not apply to collective labour disputes on interests, which arise and are not resolved in accordance with the procedure established by the Labour Code or by conducting collective bargaining on a collective agreement.

Based on the object of dispute and the subjects involved in the labour dispute, labour disputes in Lithuania are divided into: (i) labour disputes on rights (individual labour disputes on rights⁵ and collective labour disputes on rights);⁶ and (ii) collective labour disputes on interests.⁷ On the subject of industrial conflict and labour disputes, the role of Labour Dispute Commissions (DGK), which started operating in 2013, must be mentioned. The Commissions greatly simplify the process of dealing with individual labour disputes, as previously court action was the only resort. Because of long and costly court proceedings, employees usually refrained from any actions to resolve conflict situations. Since 2013, the DGK have been operating on a tripartite basis, with the active participation of national confederations and industry-level unions in the activities of the Commissions; representatives of confederations and industry-level unions both act as members of the Commissions and represent the interests of their members in resolving specific disputes.

Political relations

Trade unions that started to operate during the 1990s – that is, after Lithuania regained its independence – initially had a fairly clear political affiliation, some of them being quite closely connected with the Social Democratic Party (LSDP, *Lietuvos socialdemokratų partija*) and others with the Christian Democrats (KD, *Krikščionys demokratai*). It was quite common for unions to have some cooperation agreements signed with one or other party. Since about the mid-2010s, however, these relationships have weakened: confederations now declare themselves to be

⁵ An individual labour dispute on rights is a disagreement between an employee or other participants in an employment relationship on one side, and the employer on the other side, arising from the conclusion, amendment, fulfilment or termination of an employment contract, or regarding non-fulfilment or improper fulfilment of labour law provisions in the labour relations between the employee and the employer.

⁶ A collective labour dispute on rights is a disagreement between employee representatives on one side, and the employer or employers' organisations on the other side, regarding non-fulfilment or improper fulfilment of labour law provisions or mutual agreements.

⁷ A collective labour dispute on interests is a disagreement between employee representatives on one side, and the employer or employers' organisations on the other side, arising from regulation of the mutual rights and obligations of the parties or the establishment of labour law provisions.

completely independent of any political party and are equally open to or critical towards any political party or its ideas. The confederations have no obligations or agreements with parties and describe such connections with political parties as ‘working’ relationships. This is because ‘cooperation with political parties is weak due to the efforts of trade unions to maintain autonomy and the high risk of being subordinated to business interests that dominate the parties’ (Lipajev 2020: 115). Instead of developing cooperation with parties, unions often try to act through individual politicians, usually with a history in trade unions, through whom they initiate the implementation of legal acts or individual legal provisions that are more favourable to unions.

The trade unions’ relationships with politicians in power depend to a large extent on the latter’s attitudes towards unionism and social dialogue in general. In periods when the ruling majority is made up of political parties that are more supportive of both the union movement and their role in the decision-making process, union standpoints are more visible, more and better agreements are made. For example, in 2016–2020, the government coalition was formed by the Lithuanian Farmers and Greens Union (LVŽS, *Lietuvos valstiečių ir žaliųjų sąjunga*), which positioned itself as a political party favouring social dialogue. As a result, social dialogue greatly improved and a number of union-favourable national- and industrial-level collective agreements were signed in the public sector during this period. This increased public awareness and the visibility of unions and encouraged more people to join. After the election of the President of Lithuania in 2019, meetings between the social partners and the President or his advisers have been organized on a regular basis to discuss issues relevant to the social partners.

Trade unions also use various other channels to influence national-level decision-making. The most important of these is the LRTT and other tripartite commissions and committees in which union confederations actively seek participation. The LRTT, together with specialized tripartite councils and commissions, and tripartite councils operating within local municipalities are the main scene of interaction between public authorities and social partners. The social partners in the LRTT discuss issues and present conclusions and proposals in the areas of labour, social and economic policy. Concerning these policy areas, the LRTT has the right to receive any information necessary for the work of the Council, to adopt decisions and submit conclusions and recommendations to the parties, and to conclude tripartite agreements. The

Council meets at least once a month to discuss projects, proposed legal acts and other matters in relation to labour, social and economic issues. Discussions at the Tripartite Council are sometimes very frank, but once consensus is reached it is usually successfully implemented in practice (Blažienė 2018).

To influence decisions adopted by the Parliament or the government, union confederations try to follow the work of both these institutions and participate, as necessary, in the meetings of commissions and committees at the parliament and the government, express their positions, meet with individual members of parliament, and participate in the meetings of parliamentary factions. Seeking to further increase their influence on decision-making processes, confederations adopted the practice of sending their representatives for voluntary service at the Parliament and in government, but this practice proved to be ineffective and was abandoned. One more important channel is the unions' participation in various task forces and working groups, aimed at developing, drafting or implementing national, industry-level or regional programmes and strategic documents. As a rule, representatives of confederations are members of all key task forces and working groups created by the government, ministries and other public institutions.

Societal power

In Lithuania, a significant part of society, particularly young people, are unaware of unions or what information they do have is very sketchy. The basics of industrial relations are generally not taught in secondary schools or higher education, and the achievements of unions, their good practices in defending employees or representing their interests are rarely covered in the mass media and public debate. At the same time, this provide the unions with an opportunity. Hence, unions should make an effort to raise awareness in society. One of the best strategies, with particular reference to the LPSK, for this purpose is participation in various debates and campaigns, and mass and social media. Unions have recently been fairly successful in this respect: in 2020 one union leader was among the top three most-cited leaders in Lithuania.

Trade union activities in society are strongly dependent on their relations with politicians in power, including reforms or other relevant decisions concerning unions. For example, in 2014–2016, a so-called 'new

social model' was developed and debated, which included a new version of the Labour Code (DK). Dissatisfied with the attempts of government and business representatives to liberalize labour regulation, unions were very active in society and organized numerous rallies and protest actions during this period. Meanwhile, when the more pro-union LVŽS came to power in 2016–2020, the unions organized fewer campaigns and rallies, although they did not give up their annual campaigns, such as the May Day (1 May) or traditional union processions held on 7 October in commemoration of Decent Work Day.

Since the 1990s, trade unions have carried out various campaigns and events, targeted at achieving specific objectives. But since 2018, the unions, especially the LPSK, have frequently striven to hold 'festivals for the public': they organize concerts, processions and child zones; confederations and their affiliates set up tents in city squares where they distribute leaflets, inform about union activities, answer questions about rights and employment relations, and serve coffee. As a rule, unions avoid direct recruitment efforts during such events.

Trade unions traditionally cooperate, to a greater or lesser extent, with various NGOs working in poverty reduction, equal opportunities or the social integration of people with disabilities. They often participate and cooperate in various working groups and meetings, and share in the development and implementation of joint projects. Recently, as the issue of climate change continues to become more prominent, unions have established closer cooperation with various NGOs working in climate change mitigation. For example, the LPSK has maintained regular contact with the 'Fridays for the Future' unit in Lithuania and also in general try to include climate change issues in their agenda. Furthermore, the young, small but active and visible trade union GIPS encourages unions not only to cooperate with NGOs, but also to develop themselves and become organizations with a 'broader profile', focusing not only on labour market issues, but also on other issues relevant to employees, such as family, social and ecological issues (Lipajev 2020: 76). The unions often support various ecological or LGBT actions.

All confederations and most – though not all – of their affiliates have their own websites and Facebook accounts, where they regularly publish the most relevant information, write comments, discuss political decisions, and place notices on various campaigns, the texts of signed collective agreements or the fact that collective bargaining has been initiated.

Trade union policies towards the European Union

Since their establishment, trade unions have striven to maintain close relations with the international and EU movement, both at confederal and industrial level. Both the largest union confederations, LPSK and LPS ‘Solidarumas’, are affiliated to the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) and the ETUC, and participate in the activities of the European Trade Union Institute (ETUI), the Pan-European Regional Council (PERC), the European Trade Union Federations (ETUFs) and other European institutions and associations. They also closely cooperate with the International Labour Organization and the Baltic Sea Trade Union Network (BASTUN). Union representatives are present at the European Economic and Social Committee and industry-level social dialogue committees, as well as at several other European institutions.

As a rule, the confederations put great emphasis on international cooperation and liaison with EU umbrella organizations, union networks and union-friendly international organizations. This process usually involves all national-level union leaders, as well as the vast majority of industrial-level union leaders. In addition, the confederations have special staff members responsible for international cooperation, who coordinate and liaise both with union organizations from individual countries and with international union organizations.

According to the confederations, participation in the activities of the international and European organizations not only allows them to gain new experience and knowledge, but also has a positive impact on social dialogue in Lithuania. When particularly problematic situations arise, Lithuanian confederations often turn to international or European partners and receive their support and encouragement. The same refers to the European Semester: country-specific recommendations for Lithuania submitted for several years have repeatedly called for the promotion of social dialogue and the participation of social partners in social and economic policymaking. This provided trade unions with a stronger basis for negotiations with the government, increased their involvement in various working groups, and boosted cooperation with authorities and ministries.

RJPS (since 2021) is a member of the European association CESI, although it is rather sceptical about international collaboration. According to RJPS, union confederations, with their limited resources,

should not devote much time to international organizations, as the 'benefits of such participation for ordinary members are questionable' (Lipajev 2020: 88).

Union confederations' participation in the European Semester process is not very significant at the national level. On one hand, in recent years, all key documents related to the European Semester have been drawn up exclusively by public institutions in Lithuania: social partners may only provide comments and suggestions to the prepared documents when they are published on the Parliament's website. The form in which opinions can be expressed and the time allocated are usually unsatisfactory or insufficient to make a substantial impact on the content of the documents. Sometimes trade union representatives are also included in various working groups on European Semester-related matters. On the other hand, confederations, employers' associations and civil society organizations do not have sufficient resources to make a significant contribution to the implementation of documents or planned measures (Eurofound 2019b).

Regarding trade unionists' expectations of the European institutions in general, including European trade union umbrella organizations, Lithuanian confederations and their affiliates frequently mention their desire for stricter regulations on various social issues. This refers to the European Social Model, the European Pillar of Social Rights and even the recently discussed European minimum wage. Union representatives have continually emphasized that many of Europe's declared social aspirations are extremely desirable, but that there is a lack of political will at the national level to put them into practice, and national unions lack the strength to enforce the implementation of the declared provisions in practice. According to the unions, stricter, more imperative regulation would greatly help them to achieve their goals at the national level (Gruževskis and Blažienė 2020).

In addition to organized cooperation at the European level, the main Lithuanian trade union organizations traditionally maintain close cooperation with unions from neighbouring countries, mainly with Baltic, Polish and Nordic unions. Unions of the Baltic Sea region have established BASTUN, which includes the Baltic and Nordic countries. Every year, the heads of the union confederations of the three Baltic states meet at the Council of the Baltic States. Lithuanian unions often coordinate joint actions and initiatives with the neighbouring Latvian and Estonian

unions and there is ongoing bilateral cooperation with unions from the Nordic countries, Poland, Belarus, Ukraine and Georgia. According to union representatives, cross-border cooperation is not only a useful tool per se, but it is also important for increasing domestic cooperation of unions. Foreign experts and cooperating partners often strive to work with representatives of different national and industry-level unions operating in the country, and thus encourage internal collaboration among domestic unions.

Conclusions

Although the independent trade unions of Lithuania have faced many unfavourable circumstances throughout their existence, they have not only survived, but have also managed in some areas to secure or even expand their positions during the past few decades. These conditions include the LRTT, which ensures the participation of union confederations in key decision-making in the labour market and related areas. As the LRTT, as well as its functions, rights and responsibilities are laid down in Lithuanian legislation, its role is expected to remain significant in the future, irrespective of the ruling party. EU support for the development of social dialogue and active union cooperation with trade unions in Europe and neighbouring countries also strengthen Lithuanian unions.

The fact that membership fees are not the only source of revenues for the largest trade union confederations to a certain extent makes them less dependent on fluctuating membership and enables them to remain active at the national level. New unions, such as G1PS, may also play an important role, as they are focused on a completely new model of activity that is equally suitable for both traditional and new forms of employment.

Trade unions have also found some success in their significant and constantly growing role in the public sector. They recently achieved a breakthrough in the content and coverage of collective bargaining in the public sector and are likely to maintain it in the future. Unions expect that their success in the public sector will have a positive impact on collective bargaining in the private sector as well. According to the newest information from the Ministry of Social Security and Labour (MSSL, 2022), collective bargaining coverage in 2021 reached 25 per cent; the majority of covered employees work in the public sector.

Given all the aforementioned challenges that Lithuanian trade unions have overcome – the transformation of the economy after the collapse of the Soviet Union, growing inequality, the poor image of unions and low public trust in them, high emigration flows, strict regulation of employment relationships and often insufficient union flexibility in adapting to the new and changing labour environment – Visser's marginalization scenario should be rejected. After overcoming all these challenges Lithuanian unions were hardly likely to step back when they became significant actors in both national and European industrial relations systems. Recent trends have demonstrated some revitalization, although this involves mainly positive developments in public sector industrial relations. Thus the dualization scenario is more likely to prevail in future Lithuanian trade union development than the substitution scenario. In Lithuania, the dualist cleavage is likely remain, with strong and fairly powerful trade unions in the public sector, especially in education, health and social care, some parts of the civil service and municipal administrations. Company size is important: industrial relations remain weak or almost absent in small companies and more important in large companies, especially those with old industrial relations traditions (examples may be found in the food industry, electricity and water supply, and transport services).

This trend is further strengthened by the fact that, although platform work, as well as other new forms of employment are growing in Lithuania, as already mentioned the trade union confederations focus their attention and recruitment strategies not on the new, but rather on 'traditional', large industries (including social work, culture, civil service, retail trade).

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All links were checked on 13 August 2021.

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Abbreviations

| | |
|------------------------|---|
| G1PS | 1 May Trade Union (G1PS, Gegužės 1-osios profesinė sąjunga) |
| LDF | Lithuanian Labour Federation (LDF, Lietuvos darbo federacija) |
| LGS | Union of Lithuanian Doctors (LGS, Lietuvos gydytojų sąjunga) |
| LLPSK | Lithuanian Free Trade Union Confederation (LLPSK, Lietuvos laisvųjų profesinių sąjungų konfederacija) |
| LMPF | Lithuanian Federation of Forest and Wood Workers Trade Unions (LMPF, Lietuvos miško ir miško pramonės darbuotojų profesinių sąjungų federacija) |
| LMPS | Lithuanian Trade Union of Food Producers (LMPS, Lietuvos maistininkų profesinė sąjunga) |
| LPPSF | Lithuanian Federation of Industrial Trade Unions (LPPSF, Lietuvos pramonės profesinių sąjungų federacija) |
| LPS ‘Sandrauga’ | Lithuanian Trade Union ‘Sandrauga’ (LPS ‘Sandrauga’, Lietuvos profesinė sąjunga ‘Sandrauga’) |

| | |
|--------------------------|--|
| LPS ‘Solidarumas’ | Lithuanian Trade Union ‘Solidarumas’ (Lietuvos profesinė sąjunga ‘solidarumas’) |
| LPSC | Lithuanian Trade Union Centre (LPSC, Lietuvos profesinių sąjungų centras) |
| LPSK | Lithuanian Trade Union Confederation (Lietuvos profesinių sąjungų konfederacija) |
| LPSS | Lithuanian Trade Union Unification (LPSS, Lietuvos profesinių sąjungų susivienijimas) |
| LRTT | Tripartite Council of the Republic of Lithuania (LRTT, Lietuvos Respublikos trišalė taryba) |
| LSDP | Social Democratic Party (LSDP, Lietuvos socialdemokratų partija) |
| LŠDPS | Lithuanian Education Employees Trade Union (LŠDPS, Lietuvos švietimo darbuotojų profesinė sąjunga) |
| LŠMPS | Lithuanian Education and Science Trade Union (LŠMPS, Lietuvos švietimo ir mokslo profesinė sąjunga) |
| LSSO | Lithuanian Nurses’ Organization (LSSO, Lietuvos slaugos specialistų organizacija) |
| LVŽS | Lithuanian Farmers and Greens Union (LVŽS, Lietuvos valstiečių ir žaliųjų sąjunga) |
| NPPSS | National Unification of Officials Trade Unions (NPPSS, Nacionalinis pareigūnų profesinių sąjungų susivienijimas) |
| RJPS | General Trade Union of the Republic of Lithuania (RJPS, Respublikinė jungtinė profesinė sąjunga) |
| SD | Statistics Lithuania (SD, Statistikos departamentas) |

