What is the problem with the European Pillar of Social Rights?
Trade unions in the consultation process of the European pillar of social rights.

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1. Introduction.

In the legislative process of the European Union (EU), different partners are consulted through the open method of coordination (OMC). This enables businesses, non-governmental organisations (NGO) and several different civil society organisation (CSOs) to influence the EU commission’s legislative proposals. The commission also uses online consultations (OC), open to the public, to allow influence by both EU-citizens as well as stakeholders, such as trade unions and employer organisations.

Throughout 2016, the Commission engaged with social partners, citizens and Member State authorities to discuss the development of the European pillar of social rights; a programme for deepening the social policies of the EU through both an OMC and a OC process. The results from the consultation were then reviewed and feed into the Commissions’ proposals. This enabled the Commission to anchor their proposals with the European population, which strengthens the legitimacy of the proposed reforms.

Trade unions have a very important role in this process, as their right to be consulted on social initiatives from the Commission are stated in articles 152 and 154 of the Treaty of the Functioning of the European Union. They are also representative of over 45 million European workers and are therefore crucial for the development of the social reforms. They also hold key knowledge about some of the social areas which the Commission wants to change, such as unemployment benefits, pensions and minimum wages.¹

This thesis studies how trade unions view different social problems in the EU, with the background of the OC on the so called European Pillar of Social Rights that was conducted in 2016. The OC process is open on the Commission’s website, and it is possible to analyse how different trade unions view the social problems of the EU as well as analyse which issues they agree upon, in addition to those issues where we may see divides among them.

The unions have dismissed some of the earlier proposed reforms, and the European trade union confederation (ETUC), which is the trade union collaboration organisation at EU level, have not been able to find common ground for which they can support the Commission’s proposals. Questions regarding minimum wage have been blocked.² According to earlier studies, this is because of their deep embedment in their national welfare system and, regardless of the growing understanding that a strengthened social dimension cannot be achieved unilaterally, unions have opposed more multilateral agreements on social policy because they

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¹ These social areas are discussed in the OC process and the commission has shown initiatives that they want to pursue deeper policies in these fields.
² Seeliger, Martin. 2018. Why do (some) European trade unions reject minimum wage regulation? Trade union politics between integrationism and institutional nationalism, pp. 42-43
want to secure their national identities.\textsuperscript{3} The questions therefore arise of whether this is this still the case – and whether the earlier characteristics of the unions are relevant in the OC process on the EPSR.

Theories about trade union collaboration have stated that different unions strive for pursuing their own policies rather than striving for coordination and cooperation. This has been called \textit{institutional nationalism} and has been observed among the Nordic unions which have blocked several reforms on social policies at the EU level. The unions tend to be reluctant to allow EU intervention in their own labour structures and instead pursue policies for either block intervention or to get the other unions in the EU to adapt to them.\textsuperscript{4}

During recent years there has been, to some extent, the Europeanization of the national trade unions; one example may be the agreement that the Swedish Landsorganisationen (LO) and the Social democratic parties signed with the German trade union Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund (DGB) and Österreichischer Gewerkschaftsbund (ÖGB) in Austria and their political counterparts.\textsuperscript{5} They decided to work together for a more social Europe.\textsuperscript{6} Should this been seen as evidence that the trade unions have shifted from being bound to their national institutions to a more open approach on international collaboration? Industrial relations are different in Europe; some trade unions compete over influence in regular elections and some have a key position when it comes to shaping collective agreements and the minimum wages. Their structure as well as the construction of their national welfare systems should influence their collaboration, but is this still the case?

The OC process paves the way for an analysis of how the trade unions see the social problems of the EU. When they are asked to deliver input on the social policies that the commission asks for input on, it is possible to see if they have a coordinated approach or if their views differ.

To summarize, this is a descriptive study which investigates plausible explanations of trade union behaviour and international trade union collaboration. This study examines which positions the unions have taken on the EPSR and uses Carol Bacchis’ ‘What is the problem’ (WPR) method to examine substantial differences and similarities. The WPR method is a well-

\textsuperscript{5} Socialdemokratiska arbetarpartiet, Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands and Sozialdemokratische Partei Österreichs
\textsuperscript{6} LO, 2015, Agreement for a social progress protocol.
recognised analytical tool for understanding policy positions and offers a deeper understanding of the trade unions’ different positions. The research questions for this study are as follows:

1. How do the national trade unions view the European pillar of social rights as proposed by the Commission in 2016?

2. On which social issues can we see a unity or divide among the trade unions?

**Organisation.**

The study begins with necessary background information on the trade unions’ role in the EU. It examines how they have been studied before, as well as theoretical approaches that have been used, both in understanding the unions as well as understanding the OC process. Theories of trade union collaboration are then discussed, along with some key characteristics of how they behave on the international stage.

The study then describes the four unions analysed here. These unions have both different as well as similar characteristics. These characteristics are also fundamental for understanding why they behave as they do. This study does not claim to offer a deep understanding of why they have taken the positions that they have, but rather which positions they have taken. The explanations of their structures should help the reader in understanding how trade unions may be organised.

Following the background information, the study continues to explain the operationalisation, as well as the WPR method and the material used. Subsequent to this is the analysis of the unions.

The study concludes with a summary of the unions’ positions concerning their similarities and differences. It also suggests routes for future studies, such as trade union policies and collaboration.

**2. Previous research.**

This study analyses previous studies of trade union collaboration and the OC process. The earlier studies’ theoretical contributions will guide the study through the material. Moreover, this chapter describes how studies of trade unions in the EU and have been conducted. This chapter also clarifies differences among the unions, as it is important for understanding their positions to show differences as well as similarities
2.1 Trade unions in the EU.

Since the implementation of the Maastricht treaty in 1993, the social partners have had a guaranteed role in the legislative process of the EU. They have therefore become a significant area of study; but even before that, the partners have played a crucial role in forming EU-policy. In 1955, in the earliest days of the European steel and coal community, the trade unions were consulted on questions about social affairs and the sectoral agriculture unions were represented as early as 1963. Joint committees of employees and employer organisations have been regularly consulted, and these kinds of joint committees played a role in the development of EU-policy on road transport, inland navigation, railways, maritime transport, civil aviation, sea fishing, telecoms and postal services. In 1999, the agreement of working hours by the joint committee in the maritime sector was approved as law by the Council.

Therefore, the trade unions are important in forming EU-policy; at least on questions on which they gave specific competence. The trade unions are also crucial for the legitimacy of the EU. Most earlier studies have not had a clear focus on the national perspective among the unions. Instead, they have focused on the sectoral organisations and the European working councils (EWC). Studies have been conducted that both account for the national as well as the pan-European perspective. As this study focuses on the national perspective, the following chapters will describe the unions.

When analysing earlier studies is it evident that they tend to be based on interviews with leaders rather than position papers or questionnaire answers. This does not necessarily mean that the position papers or the answers at an OC process would be a more reliable source than the interviews, but it shows that academics have overlooked more qualitative studies of the unions’ consultation papers as an interesting source for analysis. This makes this study a clear contribution not only for the analysis of the EPSR but also because of the unused material. Some up to date studies also lack respondents to the questionnaires and some claim that EU officials from the trade unions tend to have a more pro-European approach than their national organisations. It is unclear who writes the trade unions’ position papers, but it is seemingly plausible that it is their home offices and not their Brussels representations.

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9 Lovén Seldén, 2014.
10 Ibid, p 43.
2.2 Open method of coordination and online consultations in the EU.

The unions’ part in forming EU policy through the OMC as well as OCs has already been described. The OCs have been increasingly used to strengthen the EU’s democratic legitimacy and have been widely developed and used in a series of different questions. The idea of OC is based on listening to the views of stakeholders, as well as citizens being able to contribute to the policy development.

The unions can interact with the commission both through the OC as well as through the ETUC and in different consultation hearings. In some cases, the process is focused on specific partners, and sometimes they are directly targeted to organisations and companies in closed consultation processes.\(^\text{11}\) The process on the EPSR was open and included a range of actors from individual to social partners. The answers are open to anyone at the Commission’s website and the questionnaire has more than 16000 respondents. The OC process around the pillar can be criticised, as only 880 of the answers are unique, and the rest consists of almost identical answers in English, Dutch and French. The Commission claims that this is due to a coordinated campaign by the ETUC, as they have provided the possibility of using the same answers. According to the Commission, this is the second time the ETUC has used this strategy to affect the results. The commission has therefore not analysed most of the answers and has only included the unique ones in their analysis.\(^\text{12}\)

Moreover, the trade unions could respond via the questionnaire or with own reports. Some of those reports can be found on the Commission’s website and some of them are easily found at the different trade unions’ websites. This should be seen as a lack of coherence and standardised processes of consultation, as it goes against the Commission’s claims that all submitted reports would be accessible on their website. This is also in line with the criticism that the Commission has received because of their use of a standardized questionnaire, which limits the respondents’ possibility to present their positions.\(^\text{13}\)

The process is based on the Commission handing out a series of questions or issues and asking for responses. This can either involve more open questions or multiple-choice questions.

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\(^{13}\) DGB, 2016, Stellungnahme des Deutschen Gewerkschaftsbundes im Rahmen der Konsultation der Europäischen Kommission über eine europäische Säule sozialer Rechte, pp 4-7.
The OC process on the EPSR started in the beginning of 2016 and lasted throughout the year. The responses were then reviewed, and the results were published by the commission. These processes are commonly used as a way to anchor the proposals in those stakeholders affected and among the European population. The OC process enables the respondents to work as reviewing bodies. The responses should thus not be seen as binding, as the Commission has a choice over whether to include the input in their final law proposal. However, no external analyses have been done.

The OC process is rarely analysed by someone other than the commission and, as stated by Hüller in 2008: ‘They miss out arguments; overstate the standpoint of the “big” EU-level associations, the social partners and EU Member States; and fully ignore contributions from private persons and give only little room to representatives of general interest associations like the Social Platform’. Therefore, is it reasonable to use the consultation papers and the answers in the questionnaire to study the trade unions’ position, but care must be taken not to overstate the importance of their responses or the Commission’s report. To clarify, this is a study of the trade unions’ interests in the EU system and not the Commission’s use of their opinions. It should, however, be clear that the EPSR does not necessarily reflect the trade unions’ views on the social policies needed in the EU.

This study is conducted according to some of King, Keohane, and Verbas’ criteria for studies of social science. The importance of the national trade unions when forming EU-policy, especially the EPSR, have been overlooked and no earlier studies of their role, except for an analysis by the Commission, have been conducted. The consultation papers and the answers during the OC process on the EPSR from the unions is unique material that has not been used in scientific studies, which makes the material in itself an interesting contribution for the understanding of trade union behaviour.

Moreover, the analyses of the trade unions are based on typologies and conceptions which may have changed; this is considered more in the forthcoming section. It is reasonable to update these typologies for a better understanding of trade union behaviour at the European level.

14 Quittka, Christine, 2011, p. 661.
3. Theory

Globalisation has radically changed markets, which calls for broader international collaboration between unions. Theories of international trade unions show that the collaboration is not only marked by a mutual understanding of specific issues but also out of competitiveness and conflicts.16 Trade unions have criticised the impact of the EU’s common market on their national labour market structures, as well as fought each other to obtain a substantive say on specific issues. The Nordic unions have been described as the main, if not the only, reason for not pursuing reforms on questions regarding minimum wages.17 Some theories have shown that this is because of ideological differences, while some indicate that this is because of the construction of national institutions.18 In this study, the trade unions are analysed according to both. Key characteristics, such as whether they have a political affiliation, are accounted for. This study also accounts for the total membership and analyses whether this may influence their possible stand on the issues discussed. This makes it possible to see if ideological differences, as well as the structural differences, are plausible explanatory variables. This also allows the unions to be compared to see if theoretically similar unions pursue similar policies or if the theories on trade union collaboration have to be further developed.

A way to study the unions is to group them around key characteristics. The grouping that has been used in the EU contains the Nordic, Continental, Anglo-Saxon, South-European and East- and Central European groups.19 These groups are based on the construction of their national institutions, as they were in 2008 when the grouping was developed. These different typologies ‘filters’ the views of the unions and when the responses in the OC process are analysed, it is possible to see how the different characteristics result in different framings of the social problems of Europe. It is reasonable to believe that continental unions have another perspective than the Nordic and Mediterranean. If this is the case, this study will contribute with a deeper understanding of how trade unions may frame problems, dependent on their national institutions.

The continental type of unions, in this study France and Germany, have experienced a long corporatist tradition. France, which has the lowest union density in the EU, still has a very high collective bargain coverage. The continental trade unions have an interest in ongoing EU

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17 One of the most famous cases is the Vaxholm conflict outside of Stockholm, where the collective agreements in Sweden were put under pressure by a Latvian construction company.
integration and have earlier pursued policies for a deepening of the European integration. Their policies for creating a common standard is a way of safeguard the performance of the own economic and social model. In the same time, they are reluctant to expansion of interstate redistribution policies because they would deliver most of the funds.

The Scandinavian countries are usually rather ‘Eurosceptic’. To start with, Swedish unions are interested in minimising interstate redistribution as Sweden is a net contributor to the EU. Secondly, social policies on the EU-level possible undermines their strong national position as they both a high degree of collective bargain coverage as well union density and a extensive welfare state. Even though the unions in the Nordic countries need some sort of EU policy to protect their national arrangements as the competitive pressure from other EU member states has increased with the extension of the EU.

The Mediterranean Member States are different. These countries have benefited from EU redistribution policies. Social policies are also lagging behind in these countries which makes it possible for them to pursue reforms at the EU level as it may create a more extensive welfare state. There is reasonable to believe that these unions therefore would be proponents of an extension of the European social policies.

The typologies should, however, be viewed with some criticism because they do not into account for some of the economic and political transformations that the EU has gone through in recent years, and neither are trade unions static; they change and adapt to different situations, such as different parties in government, members’ behaviour and economic change.20

Unions all over Europe have also been split and merged a series of times and their different views may sometimes be dependent on their internal structure and not on their national welfare systems.21

Other classic welfare studies often group welfare states based on Esping-Andersen typology with liberal, conservative and social democratic welfare systems.22 This grouping has several aspects and does not exclusively examine industrial relations and the trade unions’ impact on the welfare systems. The model has been confirmed in several studies and may work when grouping unions,23 but more recent studies have shown that trade unions are very different.

even in, according to Esping-Andersen grouping, similar countries. This study does not, therefore, use this grouping as it is simply not created for analysing trade unions.²⁴

EU integration shapes unions’ capabilities and positions.²⁵ It is reasonable to believe that the fiscal crisis probably had an impact on the unions and that the grouping may have changed since 2008. It is not obvious which unions strive for a deepening of the collaboration. As already noted, earlier studies have not taken the national unions’ positions into account when analysing the EPSR and the focus has often been on the legal aspects of the EPSR.²⁶ It could be argued that this calls for a more open approach when analysing the Unions’ position and that the typologies may be in fact out-dated. It should be noted that earlier studies have successfully used these typologies when grouping the unions and that national arrangement around labour and social affairs influences the unions’ willingness to work internationally.²⁷

In this study, the typologies are used to establish whether the way the unions are grouped is still relevant. Therefore, two continental unions, CFDT and DGB are included as well as one Mediterranean, the Italian CGIL and, one Nordic, the Swedish LO. These may show if the unions have changed over time, if the unions that belong to the same typology view the social problem of the EU in a similar way or whether similarities can be seen across the typologies, if, say, the CGIL and LO have similar perspectives.

4. Trade unions in Germany, Sweden, Italy and France.

In the following section, the key characteristics of the trade unions are described. These characteristics are taken from the ETUI description of trade unions and are reviewed in order to give the reader a better understanding of how trade unions may be constructed. A basic knowledge of domestic, as well as European, industrial relations helps to understand the role of trade unions in the EU system as well as the typologies from earlier studies.

4.1 Germany - DGB

Germany has had a strong presence of trade unions in forming social policy. The DGB is by far the largest union as they have almost six million members. Other unions exist but the DGB is

²⁷ See Lovén Selden, Busemeyer, Visser m fl 2009, s 49
dominant. The others have a high level of autonomy. This study will only assess the DGB. In Germany, only 18% of workers are in unions and the collective agreements covers 62%.28

Moreover, the DGB has always been pro-EU. After the Second World War, the DGB, in occupied Germany, saw the importance of creating stable Franco-German relations and they advocated for the coal and steel community.29 Since then the DGB has shifted on several EU-questions, but the basics of German industrial relations are based on five principles which shows the main characteristics of their structure.

1. The dual structure. Labour interests are represented in two ways. The first is trade union representation on a sectoral level, where DGB members such as the IG Metall represent the workers in the whole sector and negotiate collective agreements. The second is representation at the workplace level, by work councils and shop-floor representatives. Those representatives can conduct their own negotiations which will only apply to that workplace.
2. Strong regulation. In Germany, laws around strikes and lock-outs are highly complex, and most tools of pressure during extensive industrial negotiations are deemed illegal.
3. Comprehensive interest representation of the entire workforce. Collective agreements, negotiated at the sectoral level, apply to all workers in the sector, not only to trade union members. This makes the trade unions struggle for monopoly of representation. The collective agreement negotiations take place at the industrial and company level.
4. Mediator. Neither trade unions nor work councils single handily represent workers in industrial disputes, but they also have an explicit role as mediators and therefore have to respect the economic goals of the companies as well as the economy as a whole. This also applies to hostile disputes.
5. Centralisation and independence. The DGB allows its member organisations to pursue their own collective agreements negotiations at the same time as DGB is the primary representative for the union in international contexts.30

The DGB and its members have often taken an uncoordinated approach to EU questions. The German model with sectoral agreements is also promoted on the EU level which has made the DGB position different from their member organisations. The DGB dominates when it comes

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28 ETUI, 2016, Industrial relations in Germany – Background Summary.
30Jürgen Mittag, 2017, Flexible adaptation between political, social and economic interests: the multi-faceted Europeanisation of German trade unions.
to representing workers in the EU, but the member organisation also has a high degree of autonomy.

Moreover, it should be noted that the pure strength of the German economy has contributed to the DGB’s ability to pursue fruitful negotiations. The DGB also has some connections to the SPD.\textsuperscript{31}

4.2 Sweden

The collective agreement coverage in Sweden is very high - 88% - as is the union density at 70%, and the unions have had a strong historical position in industrial negotiations. The three union confederations - LO, Tjänstemännens centralorganisation (TCO) and Sveriges Akademikers Centralorganisation (SACO) - do have an extensive collaboration and share offices in Brussels. LO and TCO also have agreements to settle disputes over members. LO is the largest and is closely connected to the Social Democratic party (SAP), though the bonds between the two have weakened in recent years. The dominance of the three unions is evident and independent unions are rare, but they do exist.\textsuperscript{32}

The most important bargaining level is industrial, and the national level is mostly for coordination. In the past the national level was the primary level, but nowadays negotiations take place at the local and industrial negotiations level. Bargain covers are as high as 88% in the private sector, and 100% in the public sector have bargain coverage.\textsuperscript{33} Moreover, the areas of bargaining are more extensive than just salaries, as they cover sick pay and workplace training. The trade unions, therefore, have a substantial say in several social policy issues. Workplace representation is through the union at the workplace; there is no other channel.\textsuperscript{34}

The right to strike is secured in Swedish fundamental law, and forcible intervention is rare. The right to strike has been confirmed in collective agreements and the ban on strikes for groups, like firefighters, are self-imposed. The strikes are closely connected to the wage bargain rounds, and nearly ¾ of them are used as pressure in wage negotiations.\textsuperscript{35}

The LO has always been reluctant to accept EU-wide reforms which they see as interfering with the strong national competence. The Laval-case, which was a conflict between

\textsuperscript{31} Jürgen Mittag, 2017, Flexible adaptation between political, social and economic interests: the multi-faceted Europeanisation of German trade unions.
\textsuperscript{32} Bengtsson, Erik, 2017, Swedish trade unions and the ETUC
\textsuperscript{35} ETUI, Strikes in Sweden. https://www.etui.org/ReformsWatch/Sweden/Strikes-in-Sweden
a Latvian construction company and the LO member Byggnads, may be seen as a labour union tragedy, as the EU policies undermined their strong position. This is likely to mark the LO’s position on several issues, as the posted worker directive has particularly weakened them. The case and its legal aftermath has also been heavily criticised by the International Labour Organisation (ILO), as they claim the case threatens the right to organise.  

4.3 Italy.

Italian trade unions’ engagement at the EU-level was at the beginning marked by struggles over influence. The communist trade union, Confederazione Generale Italiana del Lavoro (CGIL), with ties to Moscow, opened an office in Brussels as early as the 1960s. The competing trade union Confederazione Italiana Sindacati Lavoratori (CISL) responded with an even more pro-EU stance. The Italian unions have had significant cooperation at the EU-level ever since.

In the 1970s, the unions even discussed possible mergers. CISL was one of the promoters of CGIL membership in the ETUC, which by then was criticised for their connections to the international communist trade union confederation. The cooperation at EU level was in that sense much more developed than other countries with similar differences. The CGIL, which is the biggest union, gives the CISL and UIL more influence because of their members, and CISL and UIL give CGIL credibility as they make them seem more independent from their communist background. It should be noted that the unions today do not have strong political connections. The unions can be described as both competitive and cooperative.

The collective agreements take place at industrial and company level and cover roughly 80% of the workforce. The percentage of memberships is at 35% and of those members, a large amount are pensioners.

4.4 France.

The unions in France have the smallest percentage of members in the whole EU, with only 8% of the workforce. They are accountable for regular strikes and have been described as one of the most influential unions in the EU. The French system is based on union elections, where workers have to vote for which union they want to represent their sector at a national level. If a

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38 Ibid.
union gets more than 10%, they are allowed to be part of nation-wide negotiations. These elections are held at the same time as regular elections. These, in contrast to the DGB, makes the unions be marked by rivalry and competition, as they compete over domestic influence.40

The unions in France were previously connected to different political parties, but have enjoyed growing independence from them. They have even banned members of parliament from also being representatives of the unions. This makes their political affiliation weak and the largest, Confédération Française Démocratique du Travail (CFDT), no longer has any political affiliation.41

The collective agreement coverage in France is very high. In 2004, 97% were covered in the private sector and of this 90% were covered by broad industrial agreements. Negotiations are usually conducted between the union’s and the employer’s organisation, but the legislative amendments are signed by the government. The state also has an important role when it comes to setting the minimum wages; it regulates the minimum-income based on the inflation experienced by the poorest fifth percentile annually. The collective agreement negotiations are held at the national and industrial level.42

The CFDT has had increasing support for the European project. They have followed the DGB proposals of a United States of Europe: ‘The confederation, therefore, promotes the creation of a supranational political authority that is “politically controlled”, which will ensure “the social promotion of workers, who are too often neglected. This means ensuring coordination between European trade unions”.43 This makes them one of the most pro-EU unions in existences. as they have called for Europe-wide reforms on the social policy field, at least since the 1960s. The CFDT wants to make the ETUC more than a coordinating organisation.44

This makes the CFDT even more pro-EU integration. The role of the French unions is therefore multifaceted. They are dependent on the state legislative position, take a strong position when it comes to strikes, and the collective agreement coverage is very high. At the same time, they do benefit from EU cooperation as it may allow for more progress on the national level than what would have been possible otherwise.

41 Ibid.
44 Ibid.
The table below summarises the differences between the unions:

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5. Method, material and operationalization.
Numerous unions contributed during the consultation process. Some of the unions have used the questionnaire that the Commissioned constructed and some of them have contributed their position papers, because the questionnaire was criticised due to the limited possibility of its filing a broad view on the issues presented.45 Some of the unions did use both. To limit the study, only answers given by the biggest ETUC members in Sweden, Italy, Germany and France will be included. This is because the ETUC has such an important role in forming EU

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social policy. ETUI has firmly described the unions from those countries’ relations and engagement in EU policy.

Moreover, Germany and France are both counted as continental unions and to analyse if the typology described in the theory section is relevant, these unions have to be compared. Italy has the highest amount of trade union members in the EU and are therefore included as they also may show differences between the Mediterranean unions and the others. LO from Sweden is included, as the Nordic countries have had a unique position and have been described as institutional nationalists. They are also significantly strong as well as having agreed upon a programme for a social Europe with the DGB, and it is reasonable to believe that their position is therefore similar. It is not possible to judge agreement in such a small study as this, and further studies are needed, but if the LO and DGB’s responses are very different, this study may show that national preferences are more important than multilateral agreements when it comes to the test.

The unions did not answer the same questions, and the examples given are therefore limited to the question for which they all have delivered comments. These questions are Pensions, Unemployment benefits and Minimum wages. The range of questions should indicate some of the characteristics of the unions’ positions as well as showing either unity or a divide, on important social questions. Similarities in these questions may also open up the opportunity for explanatory variables in future studies.

The unions that have used the questionnaire have all been given a code. LO has the code 542c20ee-96c0-4b1b-b4ec-aad0abd19235; the Italian CGIL has f5736b0f-78d0-4fb8-848f-d9a72067bf1c and the French union CFDT have 5ed975b6-e7a9-40f3-8efa-244b991ecfb. These codes enable the reader to check the answers in the Microsoft Excel document on the Commission’s website. The link to the file is provided in the reference list.46 When specific answers are referred to, the column number in the excel file is also given. As the document has over 16000 recipients, it is hard to give any more specific guidance. All answers are given in the trade unions’ native tongue and have been translated for this study. In official documents, the EU is obligated to provide a translation. As this is not an official document from the EU, there has been no translation open to the public.

As already stated, a comprehensive pan-European view is crucial for an effective policy impact. The importance of a similar framing cannot be underestimated. To operationalize this European view, it is appropriate to use the Bacchis discourse analysis method, with the question

46 Ibid.
of ‘What’s the problem?’ (WPA). The question is based on the understanding that policy solutions also entail problem descriptions and that a reconstruction of the problem allows for the identification of limitations as well as presuppositions in their answers. These problem descriptions will show similarities and differences between the unions as they frame the problem according to their perception of themselves. The problem representation method was developed as a method of policy analysis and implies that all problems presented in policy proposals also construct a problem description. This problem description is not given as it may change according to different preferences. The same problem description most likely eases the collaboration between the unions; as a European framing is more important than a national if the union advocates pan-European social reforms. The WPR method is structured around six questions:

1. What are the social ‘problems’ of Europe represented as?
2. What presuppositions or assumptions underpin this representation of the ‘problem’?
3. How has this representation of the ‘problem’ come about?
4. What is left unproblematized in this problem representation? Where are the silences? Can the ‘problem’ be thought about differently?
5. What effects are produced by this representation of the ‘problem’?
6. How/where has this representation of the ‘problem’ been produced, disseminated and defended? How has it been (or could it be) questioned, disrupted and replaced?

These questions will reveal how the unions see themselves and the problems they or Europe are facing. All unions want social reforms in the EU, but their problem descriptions may be different. Question number six is excluded as the answers to this question cannot be found in the material.

The WPR method is a useful tool for understanding that policy proposals are not only for solving problems, as they also produce problems. The method works backwards, as it starts by identifying what the proposers mean by their solution. In the case of a social Europe, this is their main claim of where the EU has problems. This may be inequalities and economic problems as well as rights, values and lack of confidence in the Union. From there, the other questions follow.

48 Ibid. pp 19-22.
Question number 2 seeks to explain the underlying reasons for the problem representation. One example is that if the trade unions find economic problems to be the most crucial, then what kind of economic problems are the underlying reasons for this? Is it the incompleteness of the EMU-zone? Alternatively, are the wage setting principles challenged?

Question number 3 does not seek any easily traceable evolution of policy. The importance of this question is to bring to light the plethora of possible developments. When the different unions are compared it is possible to observe how some structural differences as well as historical patterns may explain their different positions.49

Question number 4 arises from questions number 2 and 3. The question compares the different unions. When the issues they are silent on are highlighted, it is possible to see how the different portrayals indicate if the social problems of Europe can be thought about otherwise.50

The blank spots give us a deeper understanding of possible solutions for the EU’s social problems. If the unions omit the same perspective, this may show that there is an aspect that has to be counted for when analysing trade union collaboration, as well as trade union differences.

The last question, number 5, suggests which political implication the problem description holds. The question should not be thought of as a way to measure outcomes but rather as one that suggests out of which political implication the problem representation results in. For this question, is it reasonable to implicate how the trade unions’ influence are affected by their representations, as well as plausible approaches from the commission.51

The operationalisation is based on the concepts of view in the research question. How they portrait the problem will give a steadfast understanding of their views. Operational indicators are how they describe the issue. As an example, when they discuss minimum income, do they actively promote EU-wide reforms, or do they start discussing their national welfare system? Moreover, do they view an issue as necessary because of their national welfare system or do they actively address questions regarding other European states? If a union actively describes their will for EU-wide reforms, then this may show to what extent the union has gone through Europeanization. Moreover, questions regarding whether the Commission’s competence are important as a claim that the Commission does not have legislative rights over an area is another way of describing an unwillingness for reforms at that issue at European level.

49 Ibid. p 22.
50 Ibid.
51 Ibid, pp 22-23.
It is a fair assumption that the unions’ answers are different because of their different structure and welfare systems. The Bacchi method will clarify if that is the case. This operationalisation will work for describing the unions’ views but is not enough to understand the reasons for their different positions. This demands a deeper analysis, as well as several other aspects, such as historical analogies, political affiliation and the domestic debate over social policy. The answers to question number 3 should, therefore, be seen as an indicator of where future studies are needed.

6. Analysis
In the following chapter, the results of the WPR analysis are discussed.

6.1. What are the social ‘problems’ of Europe represented to be?
The first question is about finding the essential characteristics of the unions’ problem description. Government reports often describe the desirability of something. When governments pursue policies, they demand something. For example, reforms for developed health care systems are due to a lack of health care.52 There is no reason to believe that the unions would be different in the case of a social Europe. When they describe what they want, they may also describe what they see as missing. In this chapter, the following statements from the trade unions give an understanding of what the EU needs. Sometimes the answers are straightforward, and sometimes they are more concealed.

_Germany - DGB_
The DGB clarify that the Commission’s intentions are important - that the social policies are lagging behind the economic ones and that the world of work is going through massive changes. In line with the conclusion from earlier studies, the transformation of labour markets and globalization have changed markets and how the unions may impact on policies. According to the DGB, stronger upward convergence is crucial for the workers in the EU. The major problem description is based on their view that people have to be more important than markets. Essentially, therefore, the social problems of Europe are the transformations that the unions have gone through and their impact on the workers in the EU, and how the social policies have

not been in line with markets reforms. The DGB states that the problems for workers cannot be excluded from EU reforms. The main representation of the problem is therefore the far-reaching changes in the world of work, as they demand effective policies to be adapted to new areas.  

**Sweden - LO**

LO begins to conclude that the most pressing social needs are combating inequalities and labour market insecurities. They, like the DGB, see the need to match economic policies with social ones but also that those social policies cannot be the only way of correcting the economic politics of the EU. LO states that the internal market has led to inequalities. There is a disappointment with the economic structures of the union. LO sees a pressing need for combating inequalities, but they also state that the whole economic system entails just that. LO sees the necessity for reforms and considers the overall social problem of the EU to be inequalities.

**Italy – CGIL**

For CGIL, the most pressing need for the EU is different from DGB and LO. While the DGB and LO focus on either how social policies lag behind or the mismatch between markets and social policies; CGIL have adopted a broader more value-based approach, where social policies are described in a far-reaching way. The policies they promote are not only social policies, as they want to include questions of freedom of speech. CGIL sees that the communication that the Commission has launched is also about universal rights, and they state that ‘a job without rights makes work a commodity; universal rights make work a factor of well-being and growth’. It is interesting that they want to include a broader perspective of social rights, as they see the connection between social rights and universal rights. This also holds that EU lacks basic universal rights, which is their representation of the problem.

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54 European Commission, 2016, Public consultation on the European pillar of social rights, recipient 542c20ee-96ce0-4b1b-b4ec-aad0abd19235 answer in column O. 
55 European Commission, 2016, Public consultation on the European pillar of social rights, recipient f5736b0f-78d0-4fb8-848f-d9a72067bf1c, answer in column O. (my translation)
France – CFDT
The French CFDT portray the problem in a different way by listing six areas in need for social reforms; among those areas are: poverty, inequality, minimum wage and social dumping. These are areas where economic policies are the most important. The reason for this is that they see a crucial problem in the incompleteness of the Eurozone. Thus, CFDT is not in line with the other unions as they do not mention any values, nor do they discuss broader workers right than issues regarding economic policies.56

Conclusion.
As is evident, the unions differ widely in their views of what is most crucial when it comes to social reforms in the EU. While the DGB sees how social policies are lagging behind economic ones, LO wants to combat inequalities, and the CGIL sees a pressing demand of universal rights while the CFDT sees the importance of economic reforms. It is possible to combine economic reforms with combating inequalities, and promoting universal rights does not necessarily mean that you cannot promote a strong upward convergence. The framing of the problem leads to different policy solutions. This will be further examined in the following WPR questions.

6.2. What presuppositions or assumptions underpin this representation of the ‘problem’?
In other words, what are the underlying reasons for this problem description? The problem description always has underlying reasons. The statement that inequalities are the most crucial problems of the EU must have some reasons to back this up. Why are inequalities such a big problem? Why is the EU in need of resolute economic reforms?

Germany - DGB
The DGB claim that the underlying reasons for social policies are: ‘the British referendum decision against EU membership of their country reflects the massive loss of confidence in a union where workers are not protected against declining living standards, low real wages, precarious work and poor working conditions’.57 The need for social policies is, therefore, crucial for the legitimacy of the EU. As the DGB puts it, the massive loss of confidence in the Union needs to be tackled for the preservation of the European project, as it may result in the collapse of the whole EU. The importance of regaining trust in the EU is also crucial: ‘The EU

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56 European Commission, 2016, Public consultation on the European pillar of social rights, recipient 5ed975b6-e7a9-40f3-8ef4-244b991e9c7f, answer in column O. (my translation).
57 DGB, 2016, p 4 (my translation).
urgently needs a positive project aimed at improving the living and working conditions of people in Europe to overcome the multiple crises it is currently experiencing and to regain the confidence of EU citizens’.\textsuperscript{58} Some of the most important crises focused on are the Brexit referendum and the impact of the fiscal crisis, whereby they state that the Troika has had growing importance at the cost of collective negotiations.\textsuperscript{59} The far-reaching changes that the union has gone through is a problem because it has hurt the confidence in the EU.

Sweden – LO

LO proclaim that the EU has undermined the Swedish welfare system and the national industrial negotiations. This lack of confidence is, according to LO, not a problem in the EU as a whole but it is one in Sweden because of the welfare system established there. In almost every single question they reply upon, they state that the EU does not have any legislative rights and that the subsidiarity principle has to be respected, and they demand several times that the Swedish negotiations principle between employers and unions are respected as well as domestic collective agreements. The problem with inequalities, as described in the first question, is because the best way of combating inequalities, according to LO, is with the Nordic negotiation principles.\textsuperscript{60}

LO promotes almost no transfers to the EU level and states that ‘LO is against transfers of competence from the member states to the EU or the EMU, because the labour market is in practice mostly domestic.’\textsuperscript{61} Some acceptance can here be found that the Swedish negotiation principle would not be the social model that the EU would follow as LO strive to maintain their domestic position.

Italy – CGIL

CGIL have almost the opposite approach compared to LO. While LO want to secure their domestic systems, CGIL promotes stronger EU policies in almost any question to which they deliver answers. They want to introduce minimum wages on the EU level, and are open for EU-level pension reforms as well as introducing a silver rule for public investment. This is said to put the macroeconomic policies under EU interference. The reasons for this may be many, but

\textsuperscript{58} Ibid, p 24 (my translation).
\textsuperscript{59} Ibid, p 6 & 7 (my translation).
\textsuperscript{60} European Commission, 2016, Public consultation on the European pillar of social rights, recipient 542c20ee-96c0-4b1b-b4ec-aad0ab19235 answer in column O, P, G, T, U, AR, BD, BH, BL.
\textsuperscript{61} European Commission, 2016, Public consultation on the European pillar of social rights, recipient 542c20ee-96c0-4b1b-b4ec-aad0ab19235 answer in column AR. (my translation)
the important consequence of this is their desire to extend the Commission’s proposal to other areas as well as deepen the policies in several social areas. The CGIL view on what underpins the problem may, therefore, be that the reforms do not go far enough.\footnote{European Commission, 2016, Public consultation on the European pillar of social rights, recipient f5736b0f-78d0-4fb8-848f-d9a72067bf1c; answer in column O, CZ, CV. (my translation)}

France – CFDT
The important economic issues regarding the EPSR are seen as mostly EMU-questions. As, according to the CFDT, the economic policies are connected to the social problems, the reforms proposed entail a firm understanding of how the incompleteness of the euro-zone is a crucial need for the countries affected.\footnote{European Commission, 2016, Public consultation on the European pillar of social rights, recipient 5ed975b6-e7a9-40f3-8eфа-244b991eccfb; answer in column P. (my translation).} It is fair to assume that this strong focus on the EMU-zone arises from the effects that the fiscal crisis has had on French workers. This is also emphasised when they state that ‘The European Pillar should then recognise the need to restore dialogue and negotiation where they have been weakened by austerity policies and where they do not work because of the lack of fundamental freedoms and rights or the lack of employers’ commitment’.\footnote{European Commission, 2016, Public consultation on the European pillar of social rights, recipient 5ed975b6-e7a9-40f3-8eфа-244b991eccfb; answer in column AR. (my translation).}

Moreover, this problem description entails the belief that the countries in the EMU-zone are the most important when it comes to social reforms and that these social reforms are connected to the economic policies of the union, but does not say that the CFDT wants to limit the worker rights to the EMU-zone.

They also have some focus on how the austerity policies have undermined the ILO convention which has to be respected in the whole of the EU. It is not unreasonable to see the similarities with the CGIL position where they talk about universal rights in the whole EU.\footnote{Ibid.} Despite their discussions about the importance of following ILO conventions, the focus and the overall responses from CFDT are centred on the incompleteness of the Eurozone, as this has resulted in the economic problems that they want to combat.

Conclusion
The reasons for the Unions’ problem representation is widely different. It is not possible to see any underlying reason which all the unions agree on. The policies they pursue encompass
everything from too much EU-intervention to too little EU-intervention. This makes the underlying reasons for their problem representation different.

6.3. How has this representation of the ‘problem’ come about?
These questions aim to clarify and give possible historical as well as structural explanations for the unions’ position on questions 1 and 2. These answers give a scope of the plausible explanation that will pave the way for future studies. They give some sense of how this representation of the problem has come about, but it should not be seen as an independent variable.

Germany – DGB
The DGB has always been pro-EU. This may explain why they want to propose further social dimensions on the EU-level, as they state: ‘the goal of upward social convergence in the EU and the Eurozone can only be achieved by strengthening the acquis on social rights at European level’.

The DGB has proclaimed that the commission stepped outside of its rights when the Troika, has had a considerable say in macroeconomic policies in some of the member states. When the DGB discusses how the social policies lag behind the economic ones, they also see effects from the fiscal crisis and the intervention by the Troika in internal labour affairs, without consideration of the social partners, in economic policies. This is also a view that they proclaim several times in their Marshall plan for Europe, which they refer to several times in their position paper. This plan is constructed for an EU-wide social policy reform, whereby the common agriculture policy should be redirected to strengthen the weaker states.

Therefore, it is clear that the lack of negotiations with the social partners as well as the changes the EU faces are the plausible explanations for the DGB’s need for comprehensive EU-wide reforms. When the social partners are excluded, the legitimacy of the EU risks being undermined and as the DGB has been a strong proponent of the EU, the risk of illegitimacy and lack of trust in the institutions may undermine their interest in a strong union.

One of the issues where the DGB does not want EU interference is on questions regarding pensions; the reason for this may be found in their internal structure, as pensions are likely to be a subject of trade unions’ influence in domestic politics. Earlier studies have shown that the

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66 DGB, 2016, p 5. (my translation)
67 Ibid, pp. 6 & 17. (my translation)
68 DGB, 2016, p 7. (my translation)
level of effective trade union influence over pensions are connected to the trade unions’ bonds to their political counterparts, as is the case with the DGB which has bonds to the SDP in Germany.\textsuperscript{69} The DGB may therefore already be influential over domestic pensions, and a transfer to the EU level may decrease this. This indicates that the DGB are proponents of strong EU wide reforms regarding questions where they can maximise their influence. It is not possible to conclude if the DGB promotes comprehensive EU-policy because of a will to maximise influence over other parts of Europe but the German dominance in the EU, as well as the idea that the social systems would be based on a German model, may have influenced their stand. Their problem representation may, therefore, arise from their will to pursue a broader Europeanization as well as an acceptance that multilateral agreements are crucial in the new ways of work.

**LO – Sweden**

Why do LO frame the social problem as they do? What can explain their reluctant position and why do they focus on the undermining of Swedish industrial negotiations? The Nordic trade unions have always been reluctant to accept EU reforms.\textsuperscript{70} This is due to their strong national position, as well as their close connection to the dominant Social Democratic Party, which has had a very strong position in Swedish politics.

Moreover, on important issues such as pensions, their response is similar to the DGB. LO claim that pensions are an issue for the social partners and domestic politics, which may be explained by the fact that the transfer of power to the EU-level is likely to weaken their national position even further. However, is this the only reason for their sceptical view of EU reforms? It is not possible to say based on findings in the material, but a broader theoretical analysis points at the reshaping of Sweden labour markets, as it has limited the importance of national collective agreements.

As earlier stated, the Swedish labour partners have a high level of autonomy and LO has a vital role in industrial negotiations.\textsuperscript{71} The Nordic model for negotiating collective agreement is unlikely to be accepted at the EU level; their position is therefore marked by their will to secure their own position at national level. They state several times that Swedish collective

\textsuperscript{69} Maarten Keune (2018) Opportunity or threat? How trade union power and preferences shape occupational pensions.
\textsuperscript{70} Lovén Seldén, Kristina. (2014) 'Europeiska Fackföreningar Och Arbetsstidsreglering på EU-Nivå', Arbetsmarknad & Arbetsliv
\textsuperscript{71} European Commission, 2016, Public consultation on the European pillar of social rights, recipient 542c20ee-96c0-4b1b-b4ec-aad0abd19235 answer in column CB. (my translation)
agreements have to be accepted in Sweden.\textsuperscript{72} Moreover, as the infamous Laval case has resulted in reluctance to accept the EU capability in combating inequalities, the most effective way of doing that would be, according to LO, though the Nordic structures.\textsuperscript{73}

**Italy – CGIL**

The Italian unions are more favourable to EU reforms than the others. They are even open to an EU alternative when it comes to such vital questions as pensions.\textsuperscript{74} Why is this? Italian workers have the lowest duration of working years in the whole EU. A woman in Italy works almost 15 years less than a Swedish woman.\textsuperscript{75}

Why are they such strong proponents of EU reforms on social questions when their members are likely to lose out in these kinds of reforms? In the material no significant explanations can be found for their position on pensions, but they do claim that social policies in Italy are lagging behind their European neighbours. Therefore, despite their important domestic position, the desire for power transference to the EU-level may be based on a desire to develop firm social systems for Italians. The question of pensions is somewhat different from other issues, but the CGIL has, differently to LO, no political affiliation and they, therefore, do not have the same influence over pensions. Transference to the EU and a law binding inclusion of social partners may maximise their influence through the ETUC and bypass the Italian government. It is not possible to conclude that this is the only reason for their desire to transfer competencies to the EU level but, as they state that their domestic welfare systems are lagging behind, it is reasonable to believe so.\textsuperscript{76}

**France – CFDT.**

In the case of the CFDT it is somewhat harder to understand why they are so different in the problem description compared to the others, but a reasonable explanation may be the fiscal crisis. As they stated earlier, austerity politics are ineffective in their eyes. The CFDT does not explicitly claim that this is the reason for their demand of economic reforms, but the effects of

\textsuperscript{72} European Commission, 2016, Public consultation on the European pillar of social rights, recipient 542c20ee-96c0-4b1b-b4ec-aad0abd19235 answer in column O & P. (my translation)
\textsuperscript{73} European Commission, 2016, Public consultation on the European pillar of social rights, recipient 542c20ee-96c0-4b1b-b4ec-aad0abd19235 answer in column BP, CJ. (my translation)
\textsuperscript{74} European Commission, 2016, Public consultation on the European pillar of social rights, recipient f5736b0f-78d0-4fb8-848f-d9a72067bf1c, answer in column CV.
\textsuperscript{75} Eurostat Social protection statistics, 2016, Pension expenditure and pension beneficiaries
\textsuperscript{76} European Commission, 2016, Public consultation on the European pillar of social rights, recipient f5736b0f-78d0-4fb8-848f-d9a72067bf1c, answer in column CR.
the crisis are still being felt by their voters. Therefore, economic reforms in the Eurozone may be a way of securing their votes. However, is this a strong claim to make based on the findings in the material. It does not explain why the CGIL and CFDT are so different. CGIL’s members were likely to be even more impacted by the crisis than the French workers.\(^7\)

Another plausible explanation may be their strong domestic position, where they can negotiate on important issues on crucial questions, such as workers’ rights and pensions. This would unlikely be negotiated at the EU level, and as the collective bargain coverage is 98%, the transfer to the EU-level may lower the number of workers covered by their agreements. The competitive nature of the industrial relations in France is also a plausible explanation as the transfer of competence to the EU level would increase the combative nature, since it would make the CFDT also compete with larger unions such as the DGB. The small amount of union workers in France is likely to limit their influence at the European level.

**Conclusion.**

As we can see, the references to the internal structures as well as austerity measures during the crisis and industrial negotiations may all have influenced the social policies and the unions’ positions. The important point is that even here, the unions are different. The structures are different, as are the solutions and framing of the problems.

6.4 What is left unproblematic in this problem representation?

This question gains from comparing the different unions. When showing the areas they are silent on, it is possible to assess how the different portrayals indicate if the social problems of Europe can be considered another way. The blank spots therefore give us a deeper understanding of the possible solutions for the EU’s social problems. If all the unions omit the same perspective, then this may show that there is an aspect that has to be accounted for when analysing trade union collaboration as well as trade union differences.

**Germany – DGB**

To start with, it is harder to compare the DGB position paper with the others as they chose to organise their paper in their own way and not to use the questionnaire. This makes it likely that their areas of silence are on issues where the other trade unions are forced to answer. DGB is

\(^{77}\) EurWork, 2013, Impact of the crisis on working conditions in Europe.
clear that their position paper is constructed to fulfil their desire to fill out the blanks by the commission.\textsuperscript{78}

However, an unusual pattern emerges when analysing their position paper; the DGB promotes both restrictive and extensive policies at the EU level. On issues such as minimum wages, they see a growing demand for a pan-European framework, and on questions such as pensions they abruptly state that any interference with the national competence has to be stopped.\textsuperscript{79} They are, simultaneously, promoting the inclusion of the social partners in every question regarding social policy. To secure the social partners’ inclusion at the same time as not promoting similar positions is problematic. However, where are the blanks?

The social problems of Europe would be best, according to the DGB, solved in the way they suggest. There are no similar problem descriptions to the other continental union, the CFDT or the LO which they had an agreement with. The unwillingness to adapt to other EU countries halts their ability to advocate at the EU level. What is overseen in their analysis is the other trade unions’ different views on the social problems in the EU. The national institutionalism, where trade unions rather pursue their own policies than coordinate, is also evident in the DGB position paper.

**Sweden – LO**

When LO states that the EU has serious problems with inequalities, but do not promote any interference on important questions such as minimum wages or unemployment benefits, this makes their position difficult when intervening in politics. The industrial negotiations in Sweden have a high level of autonomy and EU-interference has already, and would further, threaten the trade unions’ strong domestic position. LO would therefore not promote any of the proposals that risk their domestic position.

LO has, as earlier described,\textsuperscript{80} blocked any ETUC proposals that would undermine their wage setting agenda at the domestic level. For combating inequalities, the inclusion of the social partners is crucial. There are severe problems with this approach on the EPSR. There is no single European social model and the role of the social partners are very different; LO does not take this into account when they promote their views to the EPSR. Their unwillingness to pursue policies in areas where they have competence in is one way they are similar to the DGB,

\textsuperscript{78} DGB, 2016, pp 4-5.
\textsuperscript{79} DGB, 2016, pp 19-22. (my translation)
\textsuperscript{80} Seeling, 2018, p 42.
as they are also pursuing their national preferences at the EU-level, regardless of what the other trade unions intend to do.

Italy – CGIL

The DGB and LO take similar positions when they declare their vision on the European level regardless of the differences among the unions and other welfare systems – the question arises of whether this is something that CGIL also does – and the answer is yes. Their willingness to promote EU broad reforms may arise from the fact that Italy lags behind on social policies.\(^{81}\) Sometimes they discuss universal rights and sometimes the rights of Italian workers. It is not unusual for the Italian unions to also focus on Italian issues, but as the other unions reject reforms which they want to pursue, it is hard to see how it would be possible for a coherent and effective trade union advocacy. CGIL’s vision for the future of social Europe cannot be promoted, as the different unions would not agree with each other or the Commission.

Therefore, can the problem be thought of differently? According to the other unions, this is indeed the case. The unions frame the problem so differently that the social problems of Europe become different too. It is therefore evident that the national institutionalism that LO has been accused of previously is also valid for the CGIL and DGB.\(^{82}\)

France - CFDT

CFDT has their clear economic focus and, different from the DGB, they do not actively support reforms outside of the EMU. CFDT’s position is problematic as the countries outside of the EMU are not likely to agree to those kinds of reforms. There is no possibility that trade unions, such as LO would leave their domestic structures and promote reforms that would affect them. The CFDT position is similar to the others as they would like the EPSR to be a product of their national institutions.

Their close connection to their national welfare system, as well as the system of industrial negotiations, has made them shift their focus from crucial transformations of labour markets, such as demographic changes, and pursue policies on economic questions. The institutional nationalism can therefore also be seen among the CFDT.

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\(^{81}\) European Commission, 2016, Public consultation on the European pillar of social rights, recipient f5736b0f-78d0-4fb8-848f-d9a72067bf1c, answer in column CR.

\(^{82}\) Seelinger, 2018, p 42.
Conclusion
All the unions have similar blanks. Their unwillingness to adapt to each other’s’ positions reduces their influence. As they do not share the same perspective, it is hard to see how they should try to influence the commission. There are structural as well as political differences that can be seen when we start to analyse their positions. Their different answers are interesting, as they show the lack of solidarity as well as coordinated cooperation. The ETUC have an important role when it comes to coordination, and, as earlier stated, they have been important when it comes to campaigning for a specific position at the EU level. However, the national unions are also important, and the DGB, CGIL, LO and CFDT are some of the most important unions in the EU.

Their different policy positions and their different problem representations make it hard to see a comprehensive trade union position. The blanks show how a functioning model for a single European social model does not exist, despite the pressing need for social reforms. How would the Commission pursue any social reforms if the social partners are unwilling to work together and come to a common standpoint? The effects of the OC results not in the strength of the labour movement in Europe, but rather shows its weakness. Their multilateral incompetence is still evident, and their embedment in their national welfare systems still hails their cooperation.

6.5 What effects are produced by this representation of the ‘problem’?
This question is about the possible political implications that this problem description results in. The relation between the unions and the Commission is crucial, as well as the possibility of them pursuing fruitful collaboration with each other.

Germany – DGB.
The representation that DGB have results in several different aspects; to start with, they want to see some extension of the Commission’s legislative powers, which results in broader EU-reforms. Second, their position limits the extension of where the Commission should have influence. Third, they want to see some limitations of the reform to issues where they can benefit, and fourth, they promote all EU-reforms and methods of limiting the influence of the Troika.

This representation of the problem results in the inclusion of social partners from all over Europe, outside of the EMU as well as inside. Such a framing goes against the LO, who they
had an agreement with. The agreement did not state which positions the two trade unions should take, but it did, however, clarify their desire to change the EU. To dismiss the agreement based on the findings in the consultation material would be to overestimate the results, but it is a reasonable indication that the reforms they are pushing for are too different and it is possible that these differences will halt the collaboration between the unions more than an agreement will ease them.

**Sweden – LO**

LO is so sharply focused on the subsidiarity principle that it is not possible to see any far-reaching changes. They want the EU to promote and include the social partners’ role in the legislative process of the Union. However, this has happened already. Therefore, is LO’s position reasonable? If LO want the Commission to promote and guarantee trade union inclusion, would it not be reasonable to also promote the positions agreed upon in either the agreement with the DGB and ÖGB or the ETUC position? The LO position arises from their institutional nationalism, and the effects may be that the proponents of EU-wide reforms limit their demands for the more reluctant unions such as LO.

There are some remarks about LO’s positions that should be made; they do not exclude all thinkable reforms, and they do say that the Commission should help the social partners. This shows that even though LO has gone through some Europeanization - they can see some multi-level solutions, which also includes reforms at the EU-level - they are still, by far, the most reluctant of all the unions in this study.

**Italy – CGIL**

The effects of the representation of the problem are that CGIL would have a hard time convincing the others of what is needed at the European level. They are strong proponents for a deepening of the social policies in the EU.

Moreover, the members of CGIL may lose out from the pension policies that their union promotes as the union, regardless of working year duration, still promote EU reforms. This is problematic as the members usually do not find a reasonable level of influence over EU

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83 European Commission, 2016, Public consultation on the European pillar of social rights, recipient 542c20ee-96c0-4b1b-b4ec-aad0abd19235 answer in column CB.

84 European Commission, 2016, Public consultation on the European pillar of social rights, recipient 542c20ee-96c0-4b1b-b4ec-aad0abd19235 answer in column P, Q & CB.
questions and the representatives in Brussels generally have a more favourable view of the EU.\textsuperscript{85}

\textbf{France – CFDT}

The CFDT’s position is that the countries outside of the EMU should not be a part of the economic reforms that they promote. That essential standpoint may also be one of the reasons for the Commission to make the obligations of the EPSR only voluntary for the non-EMU countries. It is not unlikely that the focus on the EMU countries also has effects on the CFDT’s possibilities for collaboration with other trade unions outside of the EMU, as unions such as LO do not want to join the EMU.

\textbf{Conclusions.}

This leads to the final conclusion: What effects does this problem description have? The major political implications are that the comprehensive, coherent and coordinated approach that the unions need for pursuing effective policies at the EU level would not be feasible. Their different problem descriptions may also result in the unions finding it hard to cooperate. This is in line with earlier studies which have shown that trade union collaboration is not only marked by consensus but also competition.\textsuperscript{86} The political implication of this approach makes the EPSR, to some extent, a product of incoherent trade union advocacy.

The positions can be ordered in the following manner:

\begin{center}
\begin{tabular}{|c|c|c|c|}
\hline
 & DGB & LO & CIGL & CFDT \\
\hline
1. What are the social ‘problems’ of Europe represented to be? & The social systems are lagging behind the economic freedoms & Inequalities and insecurity. & Lack of universal rights. & Economic \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\end{center}


2. What presuppositions or assumptions underpin this representation of the ‘problem’?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The legitimacy of the EU.</th>
<th>The undermining of Swedish labour rights.</th>
<th>Lack of Europeanisation.</th>
<th>The incompleteness of the Eurozone.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

3. How has this representation of the ‘problem’ come about?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The lowering of confidence in the EU</th>
<th>The high level of autonomy and influence of the Swedish trade union.</th>
<th>The social problems of Italy</th>
<th>The effects following the fiscal crisis.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

4. What is left unproblematic in this problem representation? Where are the areas of silence? Can the ‘problem’ be thought about differently?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Other states’ welfare systems, currencies, willingness for social reforms or industrial relations.</th>
<th>Other states’ welfare systems, currencies, willingness for social reforms or industrial relations.</th>
<th>Other states’ welfare systems, currencies, willingness for social reforms or industrial relations.</th>
<th>Other states’ welfare systems, currencies, willingness for social reforms or industrial relations.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

5. What effects are produced by this representation of the ‘problem’?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pro-EU wide reforms.</th>
<th>A multi-layered solution which is both for and against social reforms.</th>
<th>Pro-EU wide reforms.</th>
<th>Pro-EMU wide reforms.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

7. Conclusion – unity and divisions.

There is not one single view on the EPSR among the trade unions. Problem descriptions hold everything from comprehensive economic reforms as well as the need to respect the subsidiarity principle. The trade unions’ views indicate that their embedment in national welfare systems, or at least national institutions, still marks their position and despite the EPSR being an important leap forward for the EU’s social policies, trade unions in the EU have not settled on a single position to advocate for.
It is not possible to see unity among the different social issues discussed. The results cannot be generalised to all parts of the EU, as the structures of the unions in Eastern Europe, as well as the Anglo-Saxon ones, have not been accounted for. However, such huge differences as have been seen among LO and the DGB are interesting. There are reasons to believe that they would have been the least likely examples to have differences, as their agreement and their political affiliation suggest they should share more similar views. However, as the study has shown, this is not the case. Moreover, the typology describes DGB and CFDT as similar, but they are not.

This is interesting, as it shows that the typology is too simple. The CFDT and DGB are not more similar to each other than they are with the CGIL. Neither their typology or the agreement could explain their differences. This also indicates that the institutional nationalism that LO has been pursuing also exists among the other unions and is not unique to the Nordic unions. This is one of this studies’ contributions: their national embedment, their ideological differences as well as their structures may all affect the Unions’ positions, and the Europeanization of national trade unions has not come as far as the EPSR may have implied.

It was stated earlier that the differences among unions might be found in their ideological backgrounds, but this study has not included enough unions to generalise the results for such a claim, though it looks like neither structural or ideological differences may explain the trade unions’ views, as the issue seems to be more complicated.

This is also where future studies are needed. The willingness of trade unions to pursue multilateral policies may be indicated by their internal structures, but more studies are necessary to map the key independent variables that explain international trade union behaviour. It would also be interesting to pursue a more comprehensive study on institutional nationalism, as it is an unexplored phenomenon. Moreover, this study opens up the possibility for more in-depth studies of the unions mentioned. Is their position on the EPSR similar to an earlier policy position, or have they changed? It would also be interesting to quantify the result or try to find more in-depth explanations for the positions taken. The EPSR is still new, and studies conducted on this pillar are still needed.

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