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Objectives

The Electronic Papers published by the Portuguese Observatory for Good Labour Practices (OPBPL) main goals are to confer the accessibility and high-speed readability of essential information and good practices in regards to work organisation, collective bargaining, human resources management, labour relations, inclusion and sustainability, corporate social responsibility, and labour market statistics.

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Labour Relations Specificities (IV): trade unionism types and strategies

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Abstract

We can define the unionism as a social association of employees who want to protect their interests, fighting for better pay and working conditions, which emerges from the harsh conditions imposed by capitalism during the industrial revolution.

In Europe, there are advances in the labor associations with the dissemination of the principles of socialism. The Communist Manifesto of Marx and Engels (published in 1848) had intended to raise awareness among workers that they should fight against the capitalism "workers of the world unite!" . Its purpose was to go beyond the work conditions, the intentions was introduce a social movement that would lead to the conquest of power by the workers.

1 | The beginning of the Labor Unions - Europe and USA

Unionism appears in the XVIII Century during the industrial revolution in England and extends over Europe during the XIX Century.

The industrial revolution has played a crucial role in the advent of capitalism, because of increasing competition between the manufacturers, the machines have been gaining place in the factories and were taking the place of many workers, and workers have become "surplus manpower," the capitalist soon became master of the situation and had the power to pay what they wanted to their workers. The workers begin to join in mutual aid societies.

At this time arise two new social classes, the capitalist (owner of the means of production) and the proletariat (owner only of its workforce), which became the property of the capitalist who paid wages ever lower as to obtain more profits, forcing the proletariat to a workday that reached up to 16 hours. It is through this situation that the proletariat realizes the need to associate, and together they try to negotiate their working conditions.

Labor Unions arise, such as associations established by the workers that seeking to somehow equate her strength at the capitalist strength at the time of negotiating their working conditions, and prevent that the workers need to accept the first proposal made by the employer, in which the employee is more impaired.

In the United States, unionism was born during 1827, and in 1886 was created the American Federation of Labor, an independent organization of doctrines and policies. The association decides to take to the Congress a law regulating the eight hours of work, what happened in 1889.

This struggle left some casualties among the workers specifically in the clashes in Chicago and is in honor of these workers that the 1st of May was proclaimed the "Labor Day".

The first step was influence public opinion, the next step was influence the public opinion to influence political power. I.e., began to act politically in the struggle for better working conditions.

The introduction of the principles of "Taylorism" in the industry, have created a production in stages the and as a result of this division the technical capability has been replaced by assembly lines where productivity was subject to timing. The Labor Unions soon understand that the solidarity and collective struggle for rights was put in issue by introducing a model competition and distributed primes to distinguished the workers by their productivity and the consequent destabilization, insecurity and unemployment.

2 | The Labor Unions in Portugal

In Portugal, the type of structure of labor associations is based on Labor Unions, Federations, Unions and Confederations. The Green Paper for Employment Relations (2006 Edition) says that in 2005 in Continent existed 420 labor associations divided into 347 Labor Unions, 27 Federations, 39 Unions and 7 Confederations.

General Confederation of Portuguese Workers - National Labor Union (CGTP-IN) and the General Union of Workers (UGT) are the most active. The first with a base of support in the industrial sector and also in the area of civil service with a political link to the left forces, presenting a structured discourse in a strong appeal to the workers' struggle for their rights against employers. The second with a base of support in the banking, insurance officials in the top category with a link to political right forces and center with a strong vocation for dialogue and negotiation.

Less known and betting on a so-called alternative independent of the Confederations referenced above are the following: National Federation of Unions of Tables, Independent Trade Union Convention, Union of Independent Trade Unions, the

General Confederation of Independent Trade Unions and the Portuguese Confederation of Scientific and Technical Staff.

As stated in the Green Paper "From the seven confederations, only three developed activities with some relevance and of these only two - the CGTP-IN and UGT participate on the Economic and Social Council (CES) and in Permanent Commission for Social Dialogue". In other words, Trade Unions are in excess in Portugal as to be mentioned that there are "54 Labor Unions and 3 Federations without known activity."

It appears that between 1980 and 2005 there was an increase of over 7,7% of Trade Unions although there was a downward trend of unionism members (Table 1).

Table 1: Trade Unions registered in different years (continent)

Structure type	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000	2005
Labor Unions	328	312	321	348	325	347
Federations	22	26	26	29	25	27
Unions	38	40	41	43	39	39
Confederations	2	2	2	5	5	7
Total	390	380	390	425	394	420

Source: Green Paper for Employment Relations (2006 Edition).

Made the identification of labor associations should know the aspects of unionization in Portugal. Also according to the Green Paper based on statistics from the European Industrial Relations Observatory exist "and 1 million 165 thousand unionism members, according to the following distribution: 652.000 - CGTP-IN, 400.000 – UGT and 113.000 - other trade unions."

When we analyze the unionist discourse that is not of a strictly national, the reference is placed just above that in the case of Portugal is the European Union.

Portugal has two predominant trade unions - the CGT-IN and since the year 1978 the UGT. There are types and different conceptions of unionism in Portugal, The UGT and the CGTP-IN have differences about the ideological projects. It can therefore be argued that these organizations are politicized and not independent.

The ideology was one of the factors that influenced for decades the membership in CES. Only in 1995 CGTP-IN had joined at CES with a slow integration of the CGTP-IN sectorial organizations in the Federations of CES.

If this is the national scene at the UE level a project for a Social Europe seems destined to failure. This, after many years the trade union movements have claimed to the European governments a Social Europe, whose political component social democratic or socialist should facilitate. The recipe to a successfully European integration was a vigorous social component.

What really happens is that national unions are losing power because of its inclusion in the European context and mainly due to the internationalization of the economy. The decisions are being taken by the European Union take into account that the driving force of development is the struggle of the market that are rivals such as the United States, China and Japan. European multinationals wishing to further strengthening of forces of "capital" so they have more ability to cope successfully with globalization.

It is thus understandable that the European Union wants a labor market more flexible and tailored to the needs of the economy and on the other side to insist on the need for further cuts in public spending, i.e. less social Europe. Add to this the fact that the European Central Bank is independent in the reduction or increase in interest rates and the European Commission continue to consider the budgetary criteria untouchables of the Treaty of Maastricht and the Social Pact.

Tax cuts, more tax breaks and regulatory changes in working conditions to allow workers is a recipe that multinationals want to see implemented by EU governments, which has as its corollary the poorest and most unemployed all this happening in Europe was intended to be social.

The process of globalization (the free movement of capital among other things that are speculative purposes and the growing importance of multinationals) has consequences such as relocation, job losses, deregulation and social pressure to reduce wages. Attempts to call into question the social model and the increased exploitation of workers.

If the ills are identified and the diagnostic are made we must take into account the revenue. The strategy pointed on the seminar "The challenges of development, social dynamics and the unions" were: regular globalization, impose to the multinationals the observance of ethical standards and social control capital movements, to promote cooperation for development.

Anyway, it appears that labor unions have great difficulties in coping with the globalization of the economy and what it stands for the concentration of power of multinational corporations and international capital flows. And is not the International Labor Organization that provides international solutions, mainly because of operational difficulties related to its structural rigidity.

Sooner or later, strong social movements will emerge (see the response to the summits of the European Union and G7) labor unions have a responsibility to recognize these signs and occupy the place they deserve in social dialogue, since the victories of the union movement such the freedom of workers bargaining institutionalization of class conflict, the negotiation with the government and employers, maintenance of purchasing power and contributing to a welfare state should neither be forgotten.

3 | Further reading

SITES: <http://opbpl.cies.iscte.pt>
<http://boasociedade.blogspot.com>
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