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Lifelong Learning, Young Adults and the Challenges of Disadvantage in Europe

Edited by
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Pepka Boyadjieva
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Speaking Up: How Early Career Workers Engage in Fighting for Better Working Conditions by Joining Youth-Led Social Movement Organisations

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Günter Hefler, Ivana Studená, and Janine Wulz

Introduction

Despite the undeniable legacy of labour movements for adult learning worldwide and the recognised role of social movements in spreading ideas of lifelong learning, the interplay of industrial relations and lifelong learning remains outside of mainstream lifelong learning research, a topic of interest only to specialists. The policy discourse pays lip service to the importance of social partners but treats industrial relations at best as a

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further context to control for when investigating cross-country differences in participation in lifelong learning.

This is unfortunate as countries' (or, more precisely, their economic sectors') industrial relations systems need to be seen as key determinants of political economy and as having a critical impact on the organisational agency in workplace learning—including support for organised forms of learning. Learning opportunities and rewards for learning depend largely on the employer-employee relationship: this is shaped mainly within organised forms of conflict resolution between organised capital and labour, involving organisations representing employer and employee interests. Typically, many institutions are involved in mitigating conflicts and strike action and in seeking lasting compromises. The compromises are often enshrined in formal laws, collective agreements and rulings of labour courts.

The Enliven project took the perspectives of young workers in their early years of employment as the starting point for exploring the role of industrial relations systems in lifelong learning. Industrial relations systems depend on constant reproduction of their organisations, with new generations becoming socialised into the institutions of the field. In general, to take on responsibility and fight for a collective cause, early career workers need to be attracted by established organisations, in particular trade unions. However, young workers who feel a lack of support for their cause by existing employee interest organisations may feel a need to create their own organisations. By creating organisations of their own, young workers gain visibility for concerns they see as taken too lightly by existing bodies.

Across all European countries, early career workers have ample reasons to organise and fight to improve their employment conditions. Young people are particularly vulnerable in tight labour markets and when the number of decent jobs—those providing rich opportunities for

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individual development and learning—is in decline (Blossfeld et al., 2005). Young people are typically more often affected by unemployment, underemployment, non-standard contracts, and precarious employment conditions. In consequence, they are not only approached by the youth branches of established trade unions but are the germ of many new social movement organisations which aim to improve working conditions for early career workers.

A social movement organisation is understood as ‘a complex, or formal organisation which identifies its preferences with a social movement or a counter-movement and attempts to implement those goals’ (McCarthy, 2013). Examples of such organisations trying to improve conditions for early career (and other) workers can be found across Europe (Hefler et al., 2017). They include organisations attached to long-standing organisations such as trade unions, independent movements focusing on a specific professional field or sector and social movement organisations working against precarious working conditions and for the improvement of society in general.

In this chapter, we aim to understand how early career workers engage in social movement organisations fighting for better employment conditions. We analyse three examples of recently founded youth-led social movement organisations aimed at improving the employment conditions of young workers. In the next section, we present a framework for analysing the position of novel social movement organisations within countries’ specific industrial relation systems, which we understand respectively as particular organisational and social fields (Pernicka et al., 2018, 2019). We then present case vignettes of social movement organisations in three different countries (Austria, Spain’s Basque Region, and Slovakia) with highly diverse industrial relations systems. All the social movement organisations studied had been founded in the past ten years, mainly by early career workers. We analyse how the members of the organisations are fighting for their causes and how they are finding their ‘niche’ within the established industrial relations systems of their countries. Each case vignette draws on a case study developed as part of Enliven research (Aurrekoetxea-Casaus et al., 2019). In the chapter’s final section, we compare the three social movement organisations against the backdrop of our framework and provide conclusions for lifelong learning policy.

Comparing Industrial Relation Systems as Environments for Newly Founded Youth-Led Organisations

European industrial relation systems display a wide variety of legal frameworks, actors (employer interest organisations, trade unions), and patterns of behaviour, leading to large differences in key outcomes, such as how many employees are actually covered by a collective agreement and enjoy the agreed rights and wage levels (see Fig. 14.1). Beyond differences in *collective bargaining coverage*, how many employees are actually members of a trade union (*union density*) and how many firms (employers) are members of a business interest association (*employer density*) are of key importance. High rates of membership in business interest organisations often reflect the presence of regulations making membership mandatory for all, or many, employers.

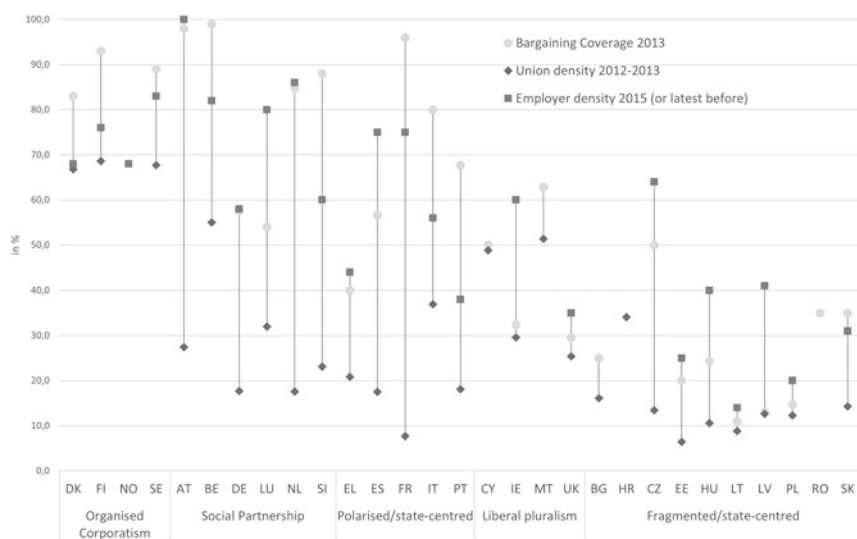


Fig. 14.1 Three key indicators for industrial relations systems (bargaining coverage, union density, employer density) (Sources: European Commission (2013), European Commission (2015), OECD (2017))

Following the influential typology developed by Jelle Visser (Ebbinghaus & Visser, 1997, 2000; European Commission, 2009), five *industrial relations regimes* can be distinguished across the European Union. The Scandinavian countries are characterised by *organised corporatism*, with high levels of collective bargaining coverage, employer organisation and union membership. In states characterised by the *social partnership* model (e.g. Austria, Belgium, Germany, and the Netherlands), collective bargaining coverage is generally high, with employers combining in interest organisations and moderate-to-high proportions of employees unionised. In Southern European countries, such as France, Greece, Italy, and Spain, a *polarised/state-centred* model can be found, with medium-to-high bargaining coverage, medium-to-high levels of employer organisation, and low-to-medium levels of union membership. In countries characterised by liberal pluralism, such as the UK and Malta, collective bargaining coverage is low or medium, the organisation of employers often low, and levels of union membership low to medium. In Eastern Europe—for example in Bulgaria, Poland, and Slovakia—the dismantling of communist industrial relations systems has left a diverse range of approaches summarised as the *fragmented/state-centred* type, with low-to-medium levels of collective bargaining coverage, low-to-medium levels of employer organisation, and typically low levels of trade union membership.

Industrial relations systems are often associated with other types of extended institutions—in particular education and welfare systems—contributing to ‘institutional packages’ (Mills et al., 2008). Together with these other institutions, industrial relations systems have a strong influence on young people’s labour market prospects—not least on levels of youth unemployment. Moreover, they correspond to marked differences in the wage levels young people can achieve (see Fig. 14.2). With *organised corporatism*, recent years have brought young people high wages combined with high levels of unemployment. In *social partnership* countries, quite high wage levels have been combined with moderate-to-high levels of youth unemployment: apprenticeship schemes have a positive effect. In countries with *polarised/state-centred* industrial relations systems, low to moderate wage levels are often combined with very high levels of youth unemployment. With *liberal pluralism*, wages are relatively high and

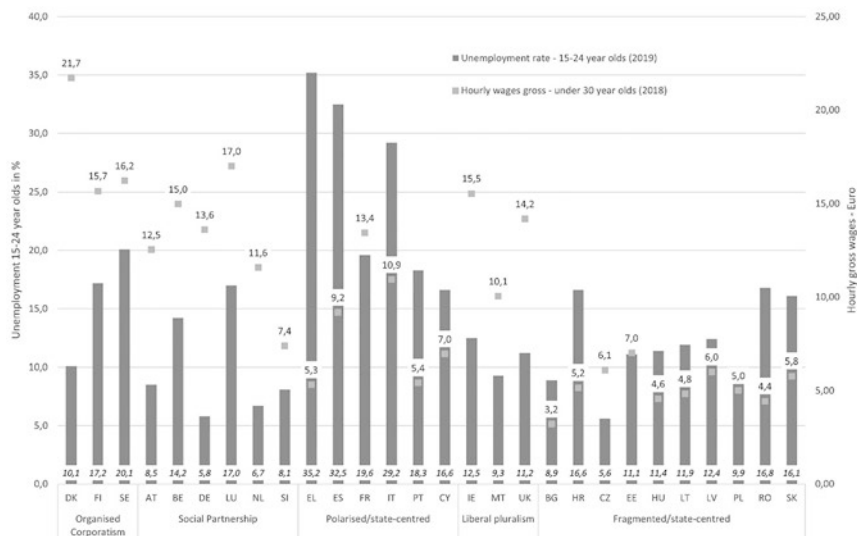


Fig. 14.2 Youth unemployment (15–24; 2019) and hourly gross wages (in Euro, under 30-year-olds) according to Industrial Relation System. (Sources: Eurostat Dissemination Database *une_rt_a* and *earn_ses18_13*)

youth unemployment quite low—at least in a year, such as 2019, when economic conditions were good. In the states with a *fragmented/state-centred* industrial relations system, wage levels are very low or low, and youth unemployment is at a low to moderately high level (as in Croatia, Romania, or Slovakia).

Trade unions typically fight to improve employment conditions for young workers and to combat high levels of youth unemployment. However, their power to improve the situation of early career workers is limited in many countries. They also need to balance competing interests among their members; some labour economists' assumptions about their having a 'rational' preference for mid-career male union members' interests may not be in line with the reality, but conflicts about the best way to meet divergent interests among groups of workers certainly occur. Moreover, as young people need to be persuaded to join a union in the first place, their rate of membership is typically lower than for older workers. (Fig. 14.3 provides details for all countries studied in Enliven, apart from Australia.)

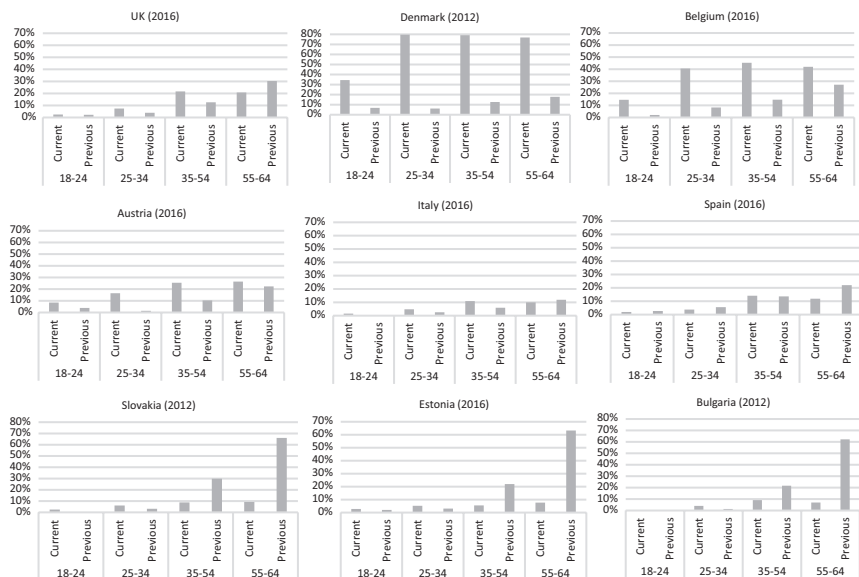


Fig. 14.3 (Former) Membership of Trade Unions or comparable organisations in nine countries participating in Enliven WP5-7—breakdowns for age groups (18–24, 25–34, 35–54, 55–64); 2016 (for Slovakia, Denmark, and Bulgaria, 2012). (Sources: European Social Survey, ESS6-2012, ed.2.4 - ESS8-2016, ed.2.1 Post-stratification weight including design weight; own calculation)

Studying Challengers Within the Industrial Relations Field

Recently founded youth-led social movement organisations aiming to improve working conditions for early career workers are at the same time locally embedded and rooted in national industrial relations and employment systems and cultural frames and welfare state systems. They implicitly or explicitly challenge long-established social movement organisations representing labour, such as trade unions and professional organisations, often drawing on experience from ‘sister organisations’ in other countries or portraying themselves as members of transnational networks and global movements. National traditions and institutional patterns of industrial relations are, however, important both for young people’s

chances in the labour market and for the social movement organisations as they fight to improve early career workers' employment conditions.

Examples of social movement organisations rallying for better jobs, fair pay, and equal opportunities for everyone and calling for a more active role of the state in redistributing wealth, constraining business action, and creating jobs can be found all over Europe and beyond. They include, from 2001, movements attached to the World Social Forum, various waves of movements of the unemployed (peaking in the late 1990s), waves of movements fighting against precarious employment, 'Occupy', and other 'anti-austerity' movements. Typically including many young people, they overlap or cooperate closely with one another, and advocate improved employment opportunities for all, including the young.

Social movement organisations may have close ties to established organisations,¹ whether as attached units or partner organisations. Engaged in ongoing, highly contentious debates on the future orientation of employment and labour market policies, they press for change on issues of employment—decent work, fair pay, and social justice—within political parties, trade unions, business organisations, churches, and many other bodies. Among these, trade unions, with their established representation of workers' interests, are important. While unions hold a key position in the industrial relations system in all countries we studied, social movement organisations tend to be initiated outside of trade unions. Often, unions are considered 'greyed'—over-concerned with older workers—although in fact, many take action (with varying degrees of success) in favour of early career workers, have a keen interest in building young people's trust, and try to enrol new generations of young workers. Generalised assumptions about how workers are best represented often prove erroneous; the specific national or regional context is vital.

Within the industrial relations field in their countries, social movement organisations take different roles. They are challengers among challengers. They address established trade unions and employer associations.

¹ Such organisations may be expected to appeal to (a) business interest organisations, (b) organisations representing workers, (c) specific partners in collective bargaining processes on a sectoral or regional level, (d) political actors either holding office or representing the political oppositions and (e) state agencies responsible for particular aspects of their concerns (e.g., public employment services).

They may try to be heard in collective bargaining arenas (at sectoral/regional or company level) and, in the political field, representatives of ruling parties and opposition parties alike.² In many cases, they address elements of the state or semi-autonomous agencies (e.g. ministries of education, public employment services), or single-employer organisations, attacking them for poor decisions or praising their good practice. They may reach out to co-workers and their families but also try to attract wider public attention. Typically, they apply conventional, if often creative, repertoires of protest and refrain from violence or breaking the law in any significant way.³

We categorised the organisations studied into three groups: (1) youth organisations of or attached to trade unions; (2) social movement organisations fighting precarious employment; and (3) social movement organisations working towards better employment conditions among highly educated young people and professionals (Heffler et al., 2017). The three case studies fall into two subgroups. A case study conducted in Spain's Basque region represents a mixed form: the social movement organisation fights precarious employment in general but is strongly attached to trade unions. Case studies in Slovakia and Austria are both of social movement organisations working for better working conditions among highly educated young people or professionals, particularly in the adult education sector.

Three Organisational Case Studies

The case studies are based on the exploration of the industrial relations systems in the countries and in the region and sector under study, the main challenges faced by young employees, the social movement organisation under study, and (where applicable) its relation to employee representation

² Only in rather exceptional cases, as observed in the Southern European countries in the years after the *Great Recession* of 2008, newly found social movement organisations may—by cooperating in large alliances—become part of a political movement strong enough to gain broad electoral support see (Morlino & Raniolo, 2017).

³ In line with ethical considerations, the field work in Enliven has deliberately covered organisations applying a conventional repertoire of contention only.

structures. The case studies involved desk research⁴ and field work. The latter was conducted between November 2018 and mid-January 2019 and involved three face-to-face, semi-structured, problem-centred interviews. These used a common guideline but were tailored to each country's specific conditions. Interviewees included two early career activists representing and/or working for the organisation under study and one representative of a business interest organisation related to the social movement organisation. As the social movement activists might be in vulnerable positions, we were careful to protect all personal information and followed detailed ethical guidelines.

The Basque case study provides insights into a broad social movement organisation, established with major trade union support, focusing not on a specific sector but on the general improvement of society and working conditions. It shows how traditional trade unions develop new approaches by establishing stronger links with social movement organisations.

The Slovak and Austrian case studies both focus on the self-organisation of teachers in the adult education sector. Two sub-sectors were chosen: career counselling in Slovakia and adult basic education, including the provision of German as a second language, in Austria. The Slovak case describes the founding of a professional organisation of counsellors while the Austrian describes a grassroots initiative by teachers.

Charter of Social Rights of the Basque Country

The Charter of Social Rights movement was founded in 2014 to face the challenges early career workers faced in the Basque region: high rates of youth unemployment, increasing prevalence of temporary work and digitalisation of the labour market had made it hard for young people to break away from their families, and many young adults—even the highly qualified—feared losing their jobs. The Charter of Social Rights movement aimed to counteract the effects of capitalism in general and the rise of precarious working conditions in particular: its aims included the general improvement of working conditions, a more egalitarian and

⁴ Desk research was based on diverse documents, including webpages of organisations, media coverage, and results of previous research on the cases.

supportive society, and defending the rights of young people in the industrial relations system.

The movement is a platform, inspired by similar movements in France, built by left-wing trade unions and other organisations from feminist, green and similar movements. The involvement of trade unions needs to be acknowledged: despite membership rates among the lowest in Europe (15.9% in 2013), they have a major role in the Spanish industrial relations system. However, few young people are union members, and union density varies between sectors. Trade unions are involved in public consultations and social dialogue processes and represent employees in a dual system—through election of worker representatives at company level and by elected representatives of trade unions at sectoral and national level.

The Basque industrial relations system is affected by the status of the Basque country as an autonomous community: under the Spanish constitution, labour legislation is a matter for the state at national level. Most Basque trade unions are nationalist and demand autonomy in labour relations. Having no representation at the national level, they rely on collective agreements; few participate in collective bargaining. The two major trade unions in the region, ELA (Euskal Langileen Alkartasuna—Basque Workers Solidarity) and LAB (Langile Abertzaleen Batzordeak—Nationalist Workers' Committee), are the main drivers of the Charter of Social Rights movement.

In 2012, a labour reform was adopted, aiming to decentralise collective bargaining and resulting in the weakening of collective agreements and a rise in company-level agreements. With precarious working conditions, and fearing losing their jobs, young people joined unions less, and the representation of young people within unions was weakened.

There is an individualism that leads us to compete in the labour market; it is also important that we don't help each other, and the conditions are difficult, bad labour conditions. And you have little time to be interested, to reflect, because you are so tired that at the end of the job, what you want is to turn on the TV and that's it. (Interview 1)

The Charter of Social Rights movement started as a reaction to the Basque government's neoliberal policies following the financial crisis of 2009. Its founders aimed to counter the loss of citizens' rights and public

services and the rise of precarious working conditions. The Basque national assembly of social and trade union movements drew up a Charter of Social Rights ‘to put our economy and our resources at the service of citizens and ensure that as many people as possible can access decent living conditions through the recognition and exercise of basic rights’.⁵ The Charter covers the environment, the economy, democracy, solidarity, sustainability, diversity, and culture.

Though founded and funded by the two major left-wing Basque trade unions, many other social movement organisations and activists are involved in organising and managing the Charter of Social Rights movement. Activities are discussed and decided upon in an annual national assembly, involving all the movement’s activists. They are discussed in more detail and carried out by a national coordination or steering group of twelve people, six representing trade unions and six social movements (feminist, diversity, social rights, environmental, health, and youth) from different sectors and regions. Steering group members also act as spokespeople. The collaboration encourages hope that trade unions will grow stronger:

if the trade union majority once again raises the social base of social micro-movements that exist throughout the territory, as it is doing in the Charter of Social Rights of Euskalherria, it will acquire more strength (Interview 2).

The social movement organisation is decentralised in operation, using non-hierarchical models of decision-making. It is involved in an international network initiative, ‘Peoples of Alternatives’, which has organised events and protests during COP (Conference of Parties at the UN Convention on Climate Change) summits since 2013. The Charter of Social Rights was discussed and adopted in 2014, and the organisation has been active since then in various fields. For example *Alternatiben Herrian* or *The People of Alternatives* events involved hundreds of activists and volunteers, mobilising 12,000 people to discuss questions of climate change (2015) or alternative social and economic models (2018). The latter, in Iruña-Pamplona, used the slogan ‘Let’s disconnect from capitalism’ (see Fig. 14.4).

⁵<http://www.eskubidesozialenkarta.com/es/eskubide-sozialen-karta/>



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Fig. 14.4 Advertisement for the *Alternatiben Herria* 2018. (Source: Aurrekoetxea-Casaus et al., 2019)

The campaign we observed was an initiative, started in 2019, to change the law to extend social protection coverage, especially through a guaranteed income allowance and housing (for more details, see (Aurrekoetxea-Casaus et al., 2019)).

Association for Career Guidance and Career Development (ZKPRK) (Slovakia)

The Association for Career Guidance and Career Development (ZKPRK, *Združenie pre kariérové poradenstvo a rozvoj kariéry*) aims to professionalise career guidance. It was established in 2018 by local members as a professional organisation to increase outreach at policy level and has a large range of grassroots activities.

The demand for career guidance can be understood within the context of the many challenges faced by disadvantaged groups in the Slovak labour market. Although historically relatively low youth unemployment (16.1% in 2019), unemployment rates among low-skilled youth and adults remain high, and labour market opportunities poor. Those inactive in the labour market are not registered by the public employment services and lack opportunities for adult education. The provision of adult education is fragmented and frequently changing, since public funding is limited and non-systematic, with precarious working conditions and high levels of self-employment and low public sector pay.

Career guidance as a sub-field of adult education has not yet achieved clear recognition and professional anchoring. Thus most people working in the field cannot sustain themselves with activities exclusively in the field of career guidance and must combine this with other work, for example providing company training or coaching.

ZKPRK is not involved in the traditional tripartite industrial relations system, represented by the Economic and Social Council of the Slovak Republic and involving the confederation of trade unions (KOZ), employers, and government. While the system is based on collective bargaining, a recent shift towards stronger legislation can be observed. The system itself has a trust deficit: as in many other Central and Eastern European countries, it is still affected by the legacy of trade unions' role

in the socialist regime prior to 1989. Associated with the old socialist system, union membership and bargaining coverage are declining, and unions are ageing (Vandaele, 2019). Specific outreach to younger target groups has been almost entirely lacking, apart from trade unions' youth council activities focusing on young trade union (KOZ) leaders.

In recent years, new unions involving more early career workers and social movements were established in various sectors, and a new confederation (joint trade unions of Slovakia) was founded in 2018. This shift towards new organisations also occurred in the education sector. The trade union of workers in education and science of Slovakia (OZPSV), established in 1990, represents 48,000 members and is the second largest union in the country. Because conditions in the sector have improved little, and the union is not considered 'sharp' enough, in 2012, a new school trade union was founded, focused on raising teachers' pay. The adult education sector remains underrepresented in both trade unions. In recent years, youth-led social movements have gained relevance, acting as watchdogs, revealing corruption in the political system and becoming active in the wide-spread civic movement 'For a decent Slovakia' following the murder of two investigative journalists in 2018. However, youth-led social movements rarely focus on work-related issues and suffer because large numbers of young people move to other countries.

The ZKPRK is a social movement organisation founded in 2014 by career guidance professionals to create a network of professionals and those interested in career guidance. It aims to foster professional growth, spread awareness about career guidance, improve access to guidance, and engender interest in both career guidance and career development. Distinct from other associations of adult education professionals, ZKPRK aims to change policy: it is considered a policy actor. Members meet at an annual general assembly, electing a council and chairperson for two years. Members are mainly employed and externally contracted counsellors working in labour offices connected with the public employment service and self-employed counsellors. The number of members increased from 20 in 2014 to 80 in 2018. The ZKPRK is a member of the International Association for Educational and Vocational Guidance (IAEVG) and the Association of Institutions of Adult Education (AIVD).

The ZKPRP's activities include information awareness raising and provision of educational opportunities for members. It provides networking and non-formal learning opportunities at a summer school of career guidance, where members can learn from each other. A key priority is the recognition of career guidance as a professional field and communicating their messages within the policy community:

...this has never happened in Slovakia, our Employment law has never, as if, was not, I would say, capable to accept, that also a future participant at the labour market could be the client of the labour office. (Interview 3).

This organisation arranges regional events for potential members as well as national events, such as *The week of career guidance*, building awareness about the field, and promotes career guidance provision for low-skilled adults, filling gaps identified in public provision. The organisation is also involved in the preparation of strategic policy documents on career guidance, adult education, and public employment service provision with ministries, such as the national lifelong learning strategy. The ZKPRP promotes its policies among political actors, for example by appealing to all political parties to include career guidance in their programmes prior to the national elections in 2020. Moreover, the organisation has been an innovative partner in a research project aimed at developing skills assessment tools for low-skilled adults and is involved in the development of professional and quality standards. In 2019, the ZKPRP organised an international conference on career guidance (for more details on the organisation, see Aurrekoetxea-Casaus et al. (2019)).

IG DAF/DAZ Basisbildung (Austria)

The IG DAF/DAZ Basisbildung (*Interessengemeinschaft Deutsch als Fremdsprache/Deutsch als Zweitsprache & Basisbildung*) in Austria was founded in 2014 following the introduction of new funding opportunities for adult basic education in Austria (Hefler & Steinheimer, 2020). Until the early 2000s, adult education stood out in Austria as a field of notoriously bad employment conditions and low wages. This resulted

from a tradition of adult education being considered voluntary work or secondary part-time work for those in full-time employment. Thus, non-standard contracts minimising social security contributions and income tax were standard and seen to benefit both employers and ‘moonlighting’ employees, who received ‘cash in hand’. However, over the past two decades, adult education has become a main job for many who do not have other regular employment. Changes in working conditions were achieved in the early 2000s and in response to rulings of the labour court in 2013–2014. While the number of adult educators in regular employment has been growing, higher costs for taxes and social security contributions were often not matched by increased public funding, and adult educators’ overall incomes have fallen. Thus teachers still face poor employment conditions, including forms of involuntary part-time work and unpaid preparation time.

The Austrian neo-corporatist industrial relations system is built on the principle of mandatory membership of interest organisations: the Chamber of Commerce on the employers’ side and the Chamber of Labour on the employees’. Sectoral level collective agreements, negotiated annually, are binding on all organisations in the sector. Very few economic activities (notably personal services in private households) are not covered by collective agreements; until 2010, adult education was one of these. Collective agreements cover wages and pay rises, fringe benefits, and employment conditions. In negotiations, employees’ interests are represented by one dedicated union for each sector, with all unions forming the Austrian trade union federation. At company level, employees have the right to elect representatives to a work council, to represent employees’ interests vis-à-vis their employers, and to be involved in key decisions; they also have some security from being dismissed. Moreover, social partners are involved in policy making in many ways: for instance, with a strong membership base as well as institutional power, they have close connections to political parties and parliamentary processes. However, the overall standing of Austrian corporatism has come under pressure over the past three decades, with signs of both decline and recovery evident, making predictions for the future difficult (Pernicka & Hefler, 2015).

Teachers in adult education used to be poorly organised, and neither members of a trade union nor members of professional organisations of self-employed people. They used to be mainly dependent self-employed workers, and therefore neither dependent workers nor members of a trade or profession. Members of neither the Chamber of Labour (or the Unions) nor the Chamber of Commerce, they were excluded from the Austrian industrial relations system.

It was only through a series of events from 1999 onwards, leading to the foundation of an adult education employers' organisation (BABE), that a collective agreement was reached for the sector in 2010. New pressures on employers led to them hiring adult educators (rather than just administrative staff) as direct employees from 2014; only since then has representation of teachers' interests in the sector started to grow.

As a response to deteriorating employment conditions in the sector and in consideration of the weak representation of teachers' voices within its new collective bargaining mechanisms, a new social movement organisation was formed in 2014:

There were these negotiations, that the BABE implemented, and we became employed under a regular contract, and at that time there was just a lot of insecurity among colleagues, what does this mean for us? – so, and I was just starting at that time, I started to be concerned with the issue of working conditions. (Interview 3).

The IG DAZ/DAF/Basisbildung was a grassroots initiative by adult education teachers in Vienna. Teachers of adult basic education and German as a second language began to meet on a regular basis and to cooperate informally in activities to improve teachers' working conditions. Later, the informal meetings became more regularised (see Fig. 14.5) and the initiative made a public appearance. The newly founded organisation aimed to make Adult Basic Education teachers' voices heard in public, as well as to prepare for collective bargaining and organisational negotiations in a few large Adult Basic Education providers.

By 2019, the IG DAF/DAZ Basisbildung involved more than 100 teachers, employed by various providers and facing conditions of varying quality. Organised as a voluntary grassroots initiative, it has no formal



Fig. 14.5 Invitation to a network meeting by the IG DAF/DAZ/Basisbildung 2017. (Source: Facebook Site IG DAF/DAZ/Basisbildung)

board, spokesperson, or membership. Decisions are made during regular meetings and are discussed via a mailing list. Over time, this social movement organisation has contributed to a large number of initiatives and organisations in adult education, and worked with researchers, other social movement organisations, and trade unions.

Other main activities include providing opportunities for exchange among teachers in adult basic education and German as a second language, preparing public statements and publications on relevant controversial issues—such as the potential role of adult educators in implementing illiberal immigration policies, where a test in civic education (*Austrian values*) became required as a part of an important German test for recent immigrants. Adult basic education teachers came under pressure to devote a large amount of their teaching to preparing participants in this new regime, with the examination denying learners of any autonomy and requiring them to learn the undisputed *right* answers by heart. Members of the organisations also organised protests, for example opposing the restrictive

immigration policies of the centrist and extreme right government at public events and conferences between 2017 and 2019.

We started as IG, approximately in February 2017, to develop a strong focus on the topic, and really, we had meetings with many, many people, we were 40 or 50, and then the conferences that were organized in [city x] about the topic ... and the cooperation with the university was intensified. (Interview 3).

IG DAF/DAZ Basisbildung's understanding of itself as a platform supporting the self-organisation of teachers in adult education is distinct from most trade unions, which are typically more institutionalised and less activist-oriented. IG DAF/DAZ Basisbildung has grown stronger, both in membership and by becoming active in workers' councils. However, the employer's representation only recognises the formally assigned, responsible trade union as being a partner in negotiating collective agreements so far.

Many teachers active in IG DAF/DAZ Basisbildung have previous experience in other social movement organisations. Their diverse competencies are a major source for learning from one another. Besides a few workshops organised by the organisation itself, and initiatives in its network, they learn informally through social interaction: networking activities, providing opportunities to discuss and reflect on working conditions and political developments. During events and activities, IG DAF/DAZ Basisbildung members gain communication, campaigning, and public speaking skills and learn how to organise, protest, and publish articles. Other learning opportunities include self-organisation and self-management in a grass-roots initiative: internal communication skills, decision-making procedures, developing discussions in a non-hierarchical setting, and so forth.

Comparison and Conclusions

The three social movement organisations studied were founded and developed in close relation to industrial relations systems already in place. While Spain, Slovakia, and Austria represent different industrial relations systems, each of the social movement organisations was founded because

of specific challenges insufficiently addressed within the national system. Precarious working and living conditions following the 'Great Recession', and declining numbers of trade union members, especially among younger workers, led to Basque unions establishing a new movement in close cooperation with existing but diverse social movement organisations. While the Basque organisation represents a more general approach—fighting precarious employment overall—the two case studies in Austria and Slovakia represent social movement organisations established because of a perceived lack of representation by trade unions. In Slovakia, counsellors in adult education founded an association for better recognition for the profession as well as for their own professional development. As a result of the role of trade unions in the pre-1989 socialist regime, existing unions face a trust deficit. There is a tendency in the country to establish new associations and unions, but the association was a response to a sense of being unrepresented by both old and new unions. It receives support from international networks. In the Austrian case, teachers in adult basic education have long experienced precarious working conditions, struggling to develop professional identity and representation structures, in a system strongly shaped by social partnership. Since trade unions are considered too institutionalised, offering poor representation for casual employees, teachers founded an association to exchange experiences and fight for better conditions of employment. Over time, they also became involved in wider movements related to migrants' rights.

All three social movement organisations operate at least partly outside institutionalised trade union structures. In the Basque case, it was initiated by the regional trade unions, aiming for closer links with other social movement organisations. The Charter of Social Rights movement was endorsed by the trade unions' conference and is funded by trade unions. However, the movement's structure involves shared responsibility between trade unions and other social movement organisations, with trade unions making up only half of the steering group. In the Slovak case, the association of counsellors was founded independently from trade unions with a primarily professional concern to make counselling more visible in adult education, lobbying for adult counselling at political level, and providing professional development. Despite the counsellors' unfavourable working conditions, the creation of a professional identity was the principal

reason for its establishment. The Austrian social movement organisation was also founded outside trade union institutions, aiming to create a network of adult education teachers to lobby for better working conditions at a time when their working conditions were changing because of court rulings and new funding rules. Over time, the organisation established ties with social partners, including trade unions and other social movement organisations, especially migrant rights movements.

The social movement organisations studied have diverse structures. All have a loose idea of membership: anyone who considers him or herself a member of the target group can easily join. They are active in reaching out to new members and adopt a network approach. The Basque organisation was established to create a network among trade unions and other social movement organisations. The Slovak organisation considers itself a professional network, for learning from each other and lobbying for the profession. The Austrian case is a network organisation of teachers, but also other social movement organisations, individuals and trade unions. However, the structures of the three organisations differ. While the Basque and Slovak cases follow the structure of a board in charge of daily business, in Austria we encounter a grassroots organisation with a less hierarchical structure. Both approaches have advantages and disadvantages, providing diverse learning opportunities to those involved.

In all three cases, engagement in a social movement organisation provides rich learning opportunities to activists and members. In the Basque case, they learnt informally from the process of establishing a new structure and bringing together organisations and individuals from diverse backgrounds. Thus, organisational, community and individual learning took place. Learning activities, including providing non-formal learning opportunities for education counsellors, are among the main activities of the Slovak social movement organisation. Activists also engage in policy making and outreach, draft papers, develop arguments, lobby, and organise public events: these provide diverse learning opportunities, and support the development of new skills. Their activities contribute to building a new career guidance sector within the country's adult learning system. In the Austrian case, the main learning source is informal learning within social interaction. This mode of learning from others in networking activities and other events is based on collective reflection on individual working conditions and political developments. Activists also improve their

skills in communication, campaigning, organising protest activities, and writing and publication.

Young employees spend many hours at work, which is therefore a place where diverse forms of learning should occur. However, many workplaces are not favourable learning environments, not only because they lack non-formal learning opportunities (such as training courses), but because working conditions make it hard for employees to engage. Precarious working conditions, non-standard contracts without social security, short-term contracts, low wages, and job insecurity are major reasons for employees to focus on priorities other than learning—such as covering their basic needs or searching for a better job. While some find ways to learn against all odds (see Chap. 15), the majority cannot. Thus, young employees stepping up and fighting for the improvement of working conditions serve the cause of lifelong learning in two ways. They struggle for improved working conditions, making learning possible for all employees, and they themselves benefit from the learning opportunities that engaging in social movement organisation brings.

The three cases are based on diverse industrial relationship systems and traditions of trade unionism. However, all three seek a way to overcome limitations in the traditional institutionalised roles of trade unions without questioning the need for union action in general. In the Basque case, the trade union itself decided to open up to social movement organisations by establishing a shared organisational structure. In Slovakia, a lack of trust in unions, paralleled by the absence of recognition for the profession of careers counsellors, led to the new organisation. The Austrian case similarly stemmed from the union's poor engagement with adult education teachers, generating a grassroots social movement organisation with a strong network approach, collaborating with the union. The three cases show the need for union activity amongst employees affected by precarious working conditions but outside traditional structures of trade unions. The organisations do not seek to replace social partnership in industrial relations but aim for recognition as additional, specialised partners with deeper understanding of particular groups of employees. Currently, many young activists engaged in social movement organisations are not included in policy consultation processes; many of their ideas remain unused. Their experiences for improving employment conditions and opportunities for learning at work are unheard. By giving them a voice in

consultation processes, the social dialogue on important aspects of employment for young people can be enlivened. Activism and involvement in policy processes is also a major building block in individuals' professional socialisation and identity and supports recognition for newly established professions.

Trade unions experience difficulties in engaging with younger workers; as young employees are unable or unwilling to become involved, social movement organisations are founded outside traditional structures. Hence, the existence of social movement organisations is not only a signal that trade unions should rethink their roles and structures but also a chance to use social movement organisations' ideas to renew industrial relations systems. Youth-led social movement organisations are laboratories producing important knowledge and practical skills and challenging established organisations, including trade unions. They expand opportunities to renew and enliven structures for representing interests and developing strategy within industrial relations. Taking the idea of learning through participation more seriously may help traditional organisations move on from treating young people as objects of political action to a more dynamic understanding that young people should be supported in standing up for their own causes. This is also related to the renewal of trade union structures, since all the social movement organisations under study follow a network approach (with trade unions a partner, among others, in their network). In future, trade unions may perhaps further enable these networks by providing support in terms of partnership, knowledge, and funding. This could also be a chance for trade unions to win back trust and enrol new members and activists, especially by providing new ways for young people to become actively engaged.

Activism is a major learning source not only for individuals but also for organisations and society. However, learning from activism is usually informal and therefore rarely recognised. While European documents advocate better recognition of informal learning, tools for recognising learning from engagement and activism remain scarce. This is of specific relevance to lifelong learning since learning from activism enables young people employed in workplaces unfavourable to learning to compensate for learning opportunities otherwise unavailable to them. Thus, the skills and experiences they can gain need to be made visible—to the individual and to future employers.

This chapter is intended to contribute to the broadening of interest in the topic of ‘learning from activism’ as an essential part of studying learning in working life and thereby to reanimate earlier traditions by giving due attention to industrial relation systems in understanding both workplace learning, and participation in job-related education in general (Bratton et al., 2003; Stuart, 2019).

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