

History and Current Developments of Trade Unionism in Poland¹

Juliusz Gardawski*

Adam Mrozowicki**

Jan Czarzasty***

Abstract

The article looks at the evolution and institutional characteristics of Polish trade unions after 1989 in a pre-1989 historical context. It highlights the role of path-dependency in assessing labour's capacity to adapt to the new economic, political and social environment which emerged following the radical institutional change. Based on field work conducted in 2009 and 2010, the paper focuses on the dynamics in organisational structure of the three nation-wide trade union organisations (Solidarity, OPZZ and FZZ), and adds a concise description of national industrial relations, emphasizing their hybrid and foggy nature.

Introduction

The changes Polish trade unions have endured since 1989 have their roots in the history of unionism in the state socialism era, the legacy of Solidarity's anti-communist

¹ The paper is based on the updated report 'Trade unions in Poland' published by the European Trade Union Institute (ETUI). Published upon permission of ETUI.

* The Warsaw School of Economics, gardawski@yahoo.com

** The Institute of Sociology, The University of Wrocław, mrozowicki@gmail.com

*** The Warsaw School of Economics, jczarz@sgh.waw.pl

struggle and, finally, an incremental, but evident metamorphosis of unions in the environment of a market economy. However, the traditions of Polish unionism stem from a deeper past. Trade unions in the Polish territories first emerged in regions controlled by Germany and Austria in the 1880s. In the part occupied by Russia, unions remained illegal until 1905, but a labour movement had been growing since at least the 1890s. Since Poles were deprived of a national state of their own for 123 years, the tendency to combine the struggle for national independence with socio-economic demands became a common feature of Polish unionism in the late nineteenth century. Notably, this legacy was reproduced much later, during workers' protests against the state socialist regime, and culminated in the political programme of Solidarity in 1980 that linked the ideas of national liberation, democratisation and economic improvements. Yet, another aspect of this long lasting cultural legacy is the chronic fragmentation of the Polish trade unions which have never been able to form a unified movement.

This article explores to what extent the legacies of the past have shaped the evolution of the Polish trade unionism in the two decades of transformation. The central feature of this article, which sets it apart from earlier studies, includes the most recent (2011–2012) primary data on trade union membership unions in the Polish by Solidarity, OPZZ and FZZ. The internal trade union statistics confronted with the existing survey data by the Public Opinion Research Centre (CBOS) make it possible to evaluate the situation of the Polish trade unions in a more systematic way than the previous studies. The article is structured as follows: In the first section, we present a short historical outlook on the developments of the Polish trade unions; focusing in particular on the historical, institutional and political sources of trade union pluralism. Next, we elaborate on organisational structures and membership developments of three main trade unions organizations (Solidarity, the All-Poland Alliance of Trade Unions, OPZZ, and the Trade Unions Forum, FZZ). Finally, we move into the discuss of the developments of trade union density and trade union constituency over the last 20 years.

Trade Unions in the Socialist Era (1945–1989)

Following a short period of union pluralism after the end of the war, in 1949, along with the top-down creation of *Zrzeszenie Związków Zawodowych* (ZZZ, Association

of Trade Unions) supervised by Centralna Rada Związków Zawodowych (CRZZ, Central Trade Union Council) Soviet-type centralisation of trade unions took place in Poland. Despite temporarily gaining a wider margin of autonomy during the short period of liberalisation in 1956, CRZZ was legally and practically subordinated to Polska Zjednoczona Partia Robotnicza (PZPR, Polish United Workers' Party). In state-owned enterprises, the Basic Party Organisation of PZPR exercised a 'leading role' over all social organisations, including trade unions (Pravda 1986: 133). Likewise, Rady Robotnicze (Workers' Councils) that emerged after the working-class revolt in 1956 were centralised in 1958 into Konferencja Samorządu Robotniczego (the Conference of Workers' Self-Management), which was also fully dependent on PZPR. Since pay differentials were standardised at the central level, the space for collective bargaining between unions and the state was very limited and collective agreements introduced after 1956 'proved [to be], in a sense, dead' (Kulpińska et al. 1994: 110). Even though Poland ratified the Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention of ILO in 1957, strikes were not seen as 'a legitimate and normal part of the union armoury' (Pravda 1986: 129). Likewise, a constitutionally guaranteed influence on policy-making for trade unions was not enforced. It was common for state socialist countries that trade unions were supposed to play a dual role (Pravda 1986: 30). In their 'production' role they were expected to participate in enterprise planning, educating members and maintaining labour discipline; while in their role as interest representing organisations, they were supposed to administer welfare benefits and defend the rights of their members vis-à-vis management. However, the main focus of union officials was welfare administration (allotting flats at the disposal of state-owned companies, distributing package holiday for employees, granting loans from the company social fund etc.).

In successive working-class rebellions in the state-socialist Poland (in 1956, 1970, 1976 and 1980), the desire to democratise the trade unions was repeatedly advanced. In state socialist Poland demands for industrial democracy and economic improvements were more and more often supplemented by the idea of national independence. However, it was not until the wave of strikes in the shipyards in Gdańsk and Szczecin in June and August 1980 when the first independent trade union could be created. In its origins, Solidarity (Niezależny Samorządny Związek Zawodowy "Solidarność" – Independent Self-governing Trade Union 'Solidarity') had a twofold character (Touraine et al. 1983). On the one hand, it was a civil movement inspired by strong Catholic values, patriotic discourse and demands for civil rights. On the other hand, it was also a trade union movement, which voiced clear socio-economic demands and left a legacy of employee voice and control at the workplace.

The union was officially registered in September 1980, following the August Agreement with the government. In April 1981, Rural Solidarity (Niezależny Samorządny Związek Zawodowy Rolników Indywidualnych "Solidarność" – Independent Self-governing Trade Union of Individual Farmers 'Solidarity'), the first independent union organisation associating individual farmers, was registered. In 1980–1981, the success of independent unionism in terms of membership growth was clear. In contrast to the official trade unions, whose organisational structure was based on industrial and occupational divisions within the labour force, the structure of Solidarity was territorial.

Solidarity struggle led to the creation of a self-managed institution on the enterprise level, Rady Pracownicze (Workers' Councils), which were elected by the whole workforce. Their main prerogatives included the rights to appoint the general manager of the enterprise, to object managerial decisions, to monitor business operations and to participate in decisions on restructuring. Solidarity envisaged a political order built on self-managed institutions extending from enterprise to national level (Morawski 1997).

The Solidarity mobilisation – also called the 'carnival of Solidarity' due to the unprecedented mobilisation of civil society – was brutally suppressed after only 16 months by the military coup d'état and the imposition of martial law on 13 December 1981. The activity of all trade unions was suspended, their property confiscated by the state and workers' strikes crushed by military and police forces. The company-level members of Solidarity either withdrew or became engaged in underground activities.

The Trade Unions Act of 1982 annulled all prior registrations of trade unions, which de facto translated into a permanent ban on Solidarity. However, the same Act also provided the legal foundations for the creation of 'reformed' trade unions and established a timeframe for the unionisation of enterprises. Enterprise-level trade unions were to be established by the end of 1982, national unions by the end of 1983 and the union confederation by the end of 1984. In December 1983, about 20,000 local unions had already been created, mainly on the basis of former member organisations of Zrzeszenie Związków Zawodowych (ZZZ). In November 1984, the founding congress of a new trade union confederation, Ogólnopolskie Porozumienie Związków Zawodowych (OPZZ, All-Poland Alliance of Trade Unions), took place in Bytom. OPZZ united 108 national union federations that grouped both craft unions and white-collar occupational unions. The Trade Unions Act also created the basis for the transfer of material assets of the trade unions dissolved after 13 December 1981 to the newly established trade unions. The 'Reformed' trade unions had to recognise the leading role of the communist party. An amendment to the Trade Unions Act,

passed by parliament in July 1985, confirmed the monopoly of OPZZ in enterprises by prohibiting the establishment of more than one trade union in a company.

At the shop floor level, the 'new' unions continued the role of their predecessors. They attempted to represent workers vis-à-vis management and oversaw workplace health and safety issues. In the first place, however, they were occupied with welfare administration and dealt with the allocation of holiday funds, loans and social benefits. At the same time, OPZZ differed from ZZZ in its active attempts to act more autonomously at the national level. Kozek (2003: 385) has labelled OPZZ an 'opposition within the system' compared to Solidarity, which she called an 'opposition from outside the system'. At the second congress in 1986 OPZZ called for the introduction of an effective system of consultation between the unions and the government and opposed an idea to constitute OPZZ as the sole representative of unionised workers (Upham 1992: 380–381).

Similarly to trade unions, Workers' Councils were suspended in December 1981. However, the authorities governing Poland during the martial law decided to reactivate them in 1983. Ethical code of the underground Solidarnosc allowed its members to participate in Workers' Councils. According to Paweł Ruskowski research (1986) from the mid 1980s, the leaders of the underground Solidarnosc led Workers' Councils in 5 per cent of the large Polish enterprises. The development of worker participation in co-managing enterprises became one of the central demands of Solidarnosc during the Polish Round Table talks in 1989.

Trade Unions After 1989: the Emergence of Competitive Pluralism

The political breakthrough in 1989, which followed the Round Table talks between opposition and government and the strike wave of 1988, contributed to decisive changes in the Polish labour movement. First, overall union density started to decline rapidly. In 1991–2010 (1991 being the first year for which comparative membership data is available), Solidarity and OPZZ membership declined threefold, from some 4,368,000 members to 1,460,003 members. Second, while the historical division between OPZZ and Solidarity persisted as the main cleavage within the union movement, new union organisations emerged and functioned outside the two major confederations. By the end of the 1990s, the estimated number of registered trade

unions in Poland was 23,995 (Sroka 2000: 169). According to table 2, the majority of them were affiliated to OPZZ. The proliferation of trade unions outside the two main trade unions triggered attempts on their part to establish a new nationwide confederation². This led to the third major development within the union movement, which happened with the establishment of Forum Związków Zawodowych (FZZ, Trade Unions Forum) in 2002.

The legal status of contemporary Polish trade unions is regulated by the Trade Unions Act of May 1991. Despite the presence of Workers' Councils in state-owned enterprises and the introduction of Works Councils in 2006 (as a result of the transposition of the European Union legislation), the trade unions have remained a major form of employee interest representation in Poland. According to the Trade Unions Act, unions can operate at the individual enterprise, multiple enterprises (inter-company union organisation) and state level (federations and their associations, defined as confederations). In general, the right to establish trade unions is granted to employees. In particular, the categories of citizens allowed to establish trade unions include hired (paid) employees, members of agricultural cooperatives and persons working on the basis of an agency contract, which is a type of freelance agreement, unless they are employers. The self-employed or employed on the basis of civil law contracts are effectively excluded from trade union membership; the unemployed and pensioners cannot form trade unions, but they can join the existing unions. The discriminatory employment status remains one of the core challenges for the Polish trade unions development, taking into account that 23 per cent of the employed in Poland are self-employed (in 2008) and some 800,000 people (around 6 per cent of the employed) worked permanently under civil-law contracts (in 2011)³. In addition, the threshold for the establishment of a basic trade union organisation (company-level union) is determined by the Trade Unions Act which says about at least 10 eligible employees within one enterprise (legal business

² It may be noted that trade unionism in agriculture appeared to undergo much less fragmentation. In 2009/2010 there were nine trade unions active in this sector, the largest of which are Rural Solidarity, Krajowy Związek Rolników, Kółek i Organizacji Rolniczych (KZRKiOR, the National Union of Farmers, Farmers Associations and Organisations), Federacja Branżowych Związków Producentów Rolnych (FZBPR, the Federation of Branch Unions of Agricultural Producers), and Związek Zawodowy Rolnictwa 'Samoobrona' (ZZR 'Samoobrona', the Trade Union of Agriculture Self-Defence). Given their separate legal status and the specific situation of their members, who are predominantly individual farmers and rural entrepreneurs and not hired employees, the following analysis will not focus on them.

³ In 2012, Solidarity denounced the Polish legal restrictions on union organising to the ILO, and the Expert Committee accepted our case.

entity). This presents another challenge for unionisation given the fact that workers in micro-enterprises (employing less than 10 people) make up about 40 per cent of the employed. In practice, they are hardly accessible for trade unions (*Raport o stanie sektora małych i średnich przedsiębiorstw 2010*: 40).

Trade union rights at the workplace level and nationwide are different depending on their representativeness status. The issue of union representativeness is regulated by two separate pieces of legislation: the Labour Code and the Act on the Tripartite Commission on Socio-Economic Affairs. Each regulation deals with the issue at a different level: the former is concerned with representativeness at company level, while the latter concerns the national level. According to the Labour Code, a company union is considered representative if it assembles more than 10 per cent of employees in an enterprise. However, trade union organisation at the company level may also become representative through affiliation to one of the trade union confederations present in the Tripartite Commission, provided it brings together more than 7 per cent of the employees in an enterprise. Representative union organisations at the enterprise level have a right to be provided with a room and technical facilities for their activities by the employer (on the company's premises), and their representatives are protected against dismissal during their term of office and for one year afterwards. Also a non-representative organisation has right to individual protection (Article 32 of Law 6 on Trade Unions) and the employer is obliged to provide them a space (Article 33).

Yet, regardless of their status, all trade unions in an enterprise are entitled to negotiate collective agreements. The results of the legal framework for trade union structures are mixed. Since the number of employees necessary to establish a new union is low, there is a strong incentive for the decentralisation of trade union structures.

Defined as one of the criteria of union representativeness at the national level, participation in the Tripartite Commission is determined by a membership threshold, currently set at 300,000. Two further representativeness criteria must be met by unions at the national level: (1) trade union confederations should be active in the entities of national economy, whose main form of economic activity combined covers more than 50 per cent of the sectors specified in the Polish Classification of Activities; (2) in determining the membership of representative union organisations, no more than 100,000 members can be taken into account per section of the Polish Classification of Activities. Both conditions are designed to ensure that trade unions have sufficient representation across sectors and branches in the Polish economy. Taking into account all the criteria, three national-level confederations

have been recognised as nationally representative and as of 2010 hold seats in the Tripartite Commission: Solidarity, OPZZ and Forum Związków Zawodowych (FZZ, the Trade Unions Forum). Whereas the former two participated in the Tripartite Commission in the early period of its operations (1994–2001), and subsequently obtained representativity in 2001 in line with the Act on Tripartite Commission, the latter was admitted by a legal judgment confirming its representativeness at the national level in 2003.

Nationally representative trade unions have the right to give their opinion on legislative acts (at the national and at the European Union level) and to put forward legislative proposals related to their areas of activities. In addition, as the members of the Tripartite Commission, they take part in the preparatory work on the state budget and the formulation of proposals on indicators of revenue increases in private companies and in the public sector. They can also play an advisory role in decision-making on pension and benefit rises included in the Social Insurance Fund, the minimum wage, the income criteria for social policy intervention and the level of family allowances.

Despite the multitude of trade union organisations in Poland, the main organisational pillars of the contemporary union movement are three nationwide representative trade unions, including two confederations, OPZZ and FZZ, and one national-level unitary trade union, Solidarity. The number of union members in organisations outside OPZZ, Solidarity and FZZ can be estimated at around 15–20 per cent of the unionised labour force (in 2012). For comparison, in 1990 only 5 per cent of union members did not belong either to Solidarity or OPZZ, and in 1991, the share of members of non-affiliated unions reached 16 per cent⁴. The figures, regardless of how crude they are, show the continuous fragmentation of the Polish trade union movement, and the creation of FZZ did not help to resolve. The sources of this fragmentation are related to the history and political orientations of OPZZ, Solidarity and FZZ as well as the break-away processes facilitated by the legal context which makes it relatively easy to form a new trade union.

⁴ Membership data for independent trade unions are authors' calculations based on the representative survey data of the Public Opinion Research Centre (CBOS) and Wenzel (2009).

Table 1. Cleavages in Polish unionism and union recognition at national level: main confederations

Union organisation	Type	Orientation	Political party	Recognition at national level
OPZZ (1984)	Confederation	Left-leaning all encompassing	SLD (1993–1997) No formal affiliation	Tripartite Commission (since 1994)
Solidarity (1980)	Unitary union	Right-leaning all encompassing	AWS (1997–2001) No formal affiliation	Tripartite Commission (since 1994)
FZZ (2002)	Confederation	All encompassing	No formal affiliation	Tripartite Commission (since 2003)

The principal political division within the Polish union movement during the 1990s reflected the historical roots of Solidarity and OPZZ. Solidarity was re-registered in April 1989. It entered a new phase of its development with a dual identity: as a political mainstay of democratic and market reforms and as a trade union movement. Until his election as president of Poland (in 1990), Lech Wałęsa headed both *Komitetów Obywatelskich* ('Civic committees') under the political patronage of Solidarity, which proposed their candidates during the first 'semi-free'⁵ elections in June 1989, and Solidarity (Wenzel 1998: 147). From 1989 till January 1992 Solidarity continued to hold a protective umbrella over the market reforms imposed by governments backed by political forces stemming from the former democratic opposition, and did not actively take a stand against the painful social consequences of economic liberalisation (Ost 2005).

Once the government by Tadeusz Mazowiecki was created in 1989, Solidarity undertook two strategic directions for its actions. In the political dimension, the National Commission of the union supported Mazowiecki's government and the market reforms programme. In the trade union dimension, Solidarity decisively changed its earlier approach which was based on the support for the employee self-management and opted for the path close to the pure unionism model (*Trzydzieści lat ustawy...* 2012: 43, 49–50). The rule was made that trade unions in market economy

⁵ As a result of round table talks from 6 February to 5 April 1989, the leaders of Solidarity and PZPR agreed that in the 1989 elections to the Sejm (the lower chamber of the Polish parliament) 65 per cent of the seats would be guaranteed to PZPR (and allied parties), with the remaining 35 per cent of the seats subject to free elections. The elections to the Senat (the upper chamber of the parliament) were free.

should not participate in the co-management of companies nor take part in the administration of social funds. Trade union leadership agreed to abolish Workers' Councils along with the privatisation of state-owned enterprises. It should be added that during our talks with the regional leaders of Solidarity in 2000s we encountered opinions that the abandonment of the self-management institutions was a mistake of trade unions (Gardawski 2009a: 482).

The assumption behind the union's reluctance to oppose economic restructuring and privatisation was that both were necessary to rationalise employment and production and, last but not least, to restore 'normality' after the decade of economic crisis in the 1980s. Within the ideology of self-regulating markets, which dominated the thinking of a part of post-Solidarity economic and political elites, strong trade unions were considered a barrier to successful economic change. A similar approach was represented by Lech Wałęsa, who asserted that 'we cannot have a strong trade union until we have a strong economy' (*Tygodnik Solidarność*, quoted in Ost 2005: 53). We can speak of a kind of gentlemen's agreement between Solidarity and the new political elites originating from the trade union. The union considered that free-market reforms were necessary but would be accompanied by reformers' social responsibility. This standpoint was certainly naïve and marked by personal relations. But already in February 1991 the union warned about the potential catastrophe deriving from the reform methods and called for a new social pact with the government (e.g. motion 7 at the 3rd National Congress). The first national protest took place in May 1991. It is true however that Solidarity did not decide for tougher action against the reforms, until the wave of strikes in 1992.

The honey moon of the relationship between Solidarity and the government ended in January 1992. The right-wing government of Porozumienie Centrum (PC, the Centre Agreement) decided to increase energy prices without consultation with the union. In response, Solidarity declared one hour, nationwide general strike. However, the strike was not supported by the majority of trade unionists. Trade unions proved to be incapable of mobilising labour, which used to be its strength in 1980–1981. Solidarity lost its 'power of veto' in labour relations, even if it kept its capacities to act as a political actor.

The growing disappointment of workers with the negative effects of economic restructuring triggered the wave of strikes in 1992, mostly provoked by the grassroots pressure of rank-and-file members. Even though Solidarity attempted to re-establish its identity as a trade union, its activities continued to follow a political logic. It was marked by strong opposition to OPZZ and the post-communist government of SLD (Sojusz Lewicy Demokratycznej, Democratic Left Alliance), even though the latter

actually slowed down the harsh economic reforms to alleviate social discontent in 1993–1997. An important aspect of the conflict between Solidarity and OPZZ was the unsolved problem of union property confiscated by authorities after the martial law and granted to the formerly ‘official’ confederation (Gardawski 2009a: 486).

In 1997, the broad political coalition called *Akcja Wyborcza Solidarność* (AWS, Solidarity Election Action), centred around Solidarity and led by Marian Krzaklewski, the union’s president, won the parliamentary elections. This success allowed the coalition to form the government, which remained in power until 2001. It was only in 2001, shortly before the next parliamentary elections, that the National Congress of Solidarity officially declared that the union would abandon direct involvement in parliamentary politics in order to focus on defending employees’ rights. The decision could be attributed to the growing disappointment among rank-and-file workers with the outcomes of structural and market reforms introduced by AWS, in particular those in health care and pensions. The primary reason was certainly the extremely low public support for AWS by the end of its period of government in 2001, severely damaging the image of Solidarity in the eyes of the working class. However, the support for a right-wing PiS (*Prawo i Sprawiedliwość*, Law and Justice) candidate in the presidential elections, Lech Kaczyński, given by the National Congress in 2005, cast doubt on this new, apolitical union identity. Notably, in April 2010 the National Commission of Solidarity again supported the PiS candidate, Jarosław Kaczyński (the brother of deceased president, Lech Kaczyński) in early presidential elections. Nevertheless, with a new president of Solidarity, Piotr Duda (elected in October 2010), the confederation seems to be determined to avoid forming close ties with particular political parties, against the tendency that often prevailed in the past (Czarzasty 2011).

OPZZ also continued to be directly involved in national-level politics during the course of the transformation, albeit on the opposite side of the political scene. In 1989 OPZZ has already created its political representation called RLP (*Ruch Ludzi Pracy*, Working People Movement). RLP together with OPZZ belonged to 30 organisations which founded the coalition of the SLD (*Sojusz Lewicy Demokratycznej*, Democratic Left Alliance) in 1991. OPZZ openly re-entered the political scene in 1993, when the SLD coalition came to power. *Zespół Posłów i Senatorów Związkowych* (Group of Trade Union Members of Parliament and the Senate), connected with SLD and assembling deputies nominated by OPZZ, had 54 members in 1993–1997, and 44 in the next parliament (1997–2001). The transformation of SLD into a political party in 1999 resulted in the termination of formal ties between OPZZ and the post-communist political milieu. However, the confederation continued to cooperate with SLD. Following SLD defeat in the 2005 elections and poor results in the 2007

elections, the ties between OPZZ and SLD have loosened and continue to exist mainly informally within social networks encompassing unionists and politicians. In the latest (2007–2011) parliament, only 10 MPs belonged to OPZZ. Taking into account the most recent defeat of SLD in the elections in October 2011 (the party won only 27 seats), cooperation between SLD and OPZZ seems to be even less likely in the near future. The confederation's ideological stance is left-wing and, with the links between OPZZ and SLD severed, recent trade union congresses criticised the market-liberal policies promoted by post-communist party in 2001–2005. It also cautiously began to build closer links with new social movements, such as the feminist movement. An example of the latter tendency was the participation of around 400 members of OPZZ affiliates in demonstrations for women's rights, marking International Women's Day in 2010, organised by Porozumienie Kobiet 8 Marca (the 8 March Women's Alliance).

Among the three main trade unions, FZZ is the least politically involved. One of the main reasons for creating FZZ was to overcome the political polarisation between OPZZ and Solidarity and to establish a platform through which 'apolitical' trade unions could participate in national-level social dialogue. FZZ has never had its own MPs. It should be noted that, while ideological conflicts were common at the national level between the three main confederations, inter-union cooperation has always been more typical for union practices at the shop-floor level (Gąciarz 1999: 221). Moreover, the shift in the balance of power in the presidential elections in 2010, confirmed by the parliamentary elections in 2011, resulted in the dominance of one political party, the right-wing liberal PO (Platforma Obywatelska, Civic Platform). The PO government has so far not been interested in taking into account the trade unions' voice in formulating its policies. The government's anti-union stance seems to be bringing the three trade unions together.

The political divisions among closer Solidarity, OPZZ and FZZ have been to some extent decreased by their growing involvement in the international labour movement. Solidarity was admitted as an observer by the ETUC (European Trade Union Confederation) and the ITUC (International Trade Union Confederation) in 1991 and became a full member of both in 1996. OPZZ, having resigned from its membership in the World Federation of Trade Unions in 1997, applied for ETUC membership in 1998. Its application remained pending for years, due to the counteraction of Solidarity. The main reason was the unsolved problem (mentioned above) of the division of property inherited by OPZZ from CRZZ and the issue of compensation for the property of Solidarity confiscated by the communist authorities in 1981. Having resolved these problems, OPZZ became a member of the ETUC and the ITUC in 2006. FZZ used to be

the member of the *Confédération Européenne des Syndicats Indépendants* (European Confederation of Independent Trade Unions, CESI). However, in March 2012, the FZZ also joined the ETUC. The representatives of the three trade unions participate in the work of the EU European Economic and Social Committee.

The three largest nationally representative trade unions are under continuous pressure of the smaller break-away unions which challenge their positions and stances at the national and company levels. According to the survey data from 2008, there are up to 600,000 members of trade unions that are not affiliated with OPZZ, Solidarity or FZZ. These include both company-level trade unions and some national-level federations. The largest include all-grades multi-sector unions, such as WZZ Sierpień '80 (Wolny Związek Zawodowy Sierpień '80, Free Trade Union August '80), single branch all-grade unions (such as Związek Zawodowy Pracowników Rolnictwa w RP, ZZPR RP Trade Union of Agricultural Employees), staff associations (such as the trade unions of employees in the state administration) and professional associations (such as Ogólnopolski Związek Zawodowy Lekarzy OZZL, Doctors' Trade Union of Poland). In some larger companies, especially in the public sector, the existence of more than a dozen trade unions is common. If the authors data is correct, the 'record' of the number of unions in one company was achieved in one of the coal mining holdings, in which 74 trade unions were present. 'Competitive pluralism' within the Polish union movement is often mentioned as an impediment to the development of sectoral and national social dialogue in Poland (Gardawski 2003). Although open conflicts between trade unions are currently rare, their divisions make it impossible to agree upon one, balanced programme. It happens that trade unions try to outdo each other in their demands. When some of them sign an agreement with the management, other organise protests against this agreement. Examples include the strike in Tesco organised in 2008 by WZZ Sierpień '80 against the agreement negotiated by Solidarity or the strike at the Polish Post led by Solidarity against the agreement achieved by OPZZ also organised in 2008.

Occasional political alliances among the autonomous trade unions are not uncommon but tend to be fairly short-lived. Trade unions that appear to be cultivating the social movement unionism model are Wolny Związek Zawodowy Sierpień '80 (WZZ Sierpień'80, Free Trade Union August '80), launched by radical dissidents from Solidarity, and, the much smaller Ogólnopolski Związek Zawodowy Inicjatywa Pracownicza (OZZ IP, All-Poland Trade Union Workers' Initiative), both of which are seeking links with new left-wing social movements. WZZ Sierpień '80 registered its own political party, the Polish Labour Party (PPP, Polska Partia Pracy). During parliamentary elections in 2011, it put forward its candidates in all electoral districts.

However, it gained very limited support (0.55 per cent). The leader of WZZ Sierpień '80 is at the same time the leader of PPP and he was one of the candidates in the recent presidential elections (support 0.18 per cent).

Trade Union Structures: Genesis and Development

The trade union capacities to cope with new economic and political changes after 1989 were not only dependent on 'external' factors, such as the features of institutional and economic contexts, but also on their internal structures which reflect the legacy of their historical developments (see Czarzasty, Gajewska, Mrozowicki 2012). The current internal structure and organisation of the Polish union movement was predominantly shaped after the Second World War. The 'official' Union of Trade Unions, ZZZ, supervised by CRZZ, was founded in 1949 on the basis of branch union federations, which to a large extent emulated the interwar organisation of the 'class' type of trade union. Most of the 23 unions associated in ZZZ had – at least nominally – pre-war traditions. The 'oldest' roots were those of unions established as craft unions and blue-collar occupational unions, such as Związek Zawodowy Pracowników Poligrafii (ZZPP, Printing Workers' Trade Union) or Związek Zawodowy Górników (ZZG, Miners' Trade Union).

Trade unions affiliated to ZZZ functioned as all-grade single branch unions, which associated both white-collar and blue-collar occupations in one of 23 branches. Besides its branch-based structure, ZZZ also had regional councils in 14 (until the administrative reform in 1975) and – since 1975 – 49 regions (voivodeships). Formally, the structure of unions organised in ZZZ included democratic mechanisms for election and workers' participation⁶. In practice, democratic procedures were limited and ZZZ suffered ongoing problems of over-centralisation, poor internal communication and a lack of responsiveness within the union hierarchy (Pravda 1986: 140). In January 1981, in the wake of Solidarity's popularity, ZZZ was formally dissolved and its member organisations either ceased to exist or voted to transform themselves into autonomous and independent trade unions.

⁶ Workers' union branches, as the basic members of union federations, were supposed to elect a shop council and send their delegates to national congresses, which, in turn, elected the officers of the CRZZ.

The All-Poland Alliance of Trade Unions (OPZZ)

The structure of OPZZ was designed to be different from that of ZZZ. The confederation claims to be the result of grassroots needs to re-consolidate the fragmented left-wing union movement in the 1980s. The new union confederation was recreated mostly on the basis of material assets and membership of ZZZ. In 1985, part of the funds of the outlawed Solidarity were also transferred to it (Upham 1992: 380). The organisational structure of OPZZ differed from its predecessor and reflected the mechanism of establishing 'new' trade unions provided for by the 1982 Trade Unions Act. Company union organisations, which had separate legal statutes, were federated into national-level organisations (108 in 1984). The latter were, in turn, confederated into national-level confederation OPZZ in 1984. Besides federations, there were also some unions established as unitary craft unions and white-collar occupational unions. In order to distinguish itself from ZZZ, OPZZ emphasised the decision-making autonomy of member unions vis-à-vis the confederation (Upham 1992: 380). Nevertheless, it was still considered by some workers as an 'official' confederation, membership of which had political connotations (Gardawski 2009a: 473). In the first years of its existence, OPZZ managed to partially overcome the initial 'ostracism' of workers by performing traditional social functions, including providing loans and other forms of social assistance at workplaces (Gardawski 2009a).

As OPZZ had been created in a bottom-up manner due to arising tendencies towards union decentralisation. Those tendencies kept growing stronger as the communist party position was becoming weaker. Even before 1989, ZNP had tried to leave OPZZ, but the attempted breakaway eventually failed. In 1989 and afterwards tendencies towards union decentralisation increased even further. Some unions, which did not want to be identified with the 'official' and 'communist' federation, left OPZZ right after the political change, while other withdrew at the beginning of the 1990s. In some cases, company unions quit their federation in favour of joining the relevant OPZZ territorial structure (thus ceasing to be subordinated to the original federation and becoming a member of the district OPZZ council). There were also incidents of entire federations departing OPZZ, with which decision not all company-level organisations would comply, opting to maintain their association with the confederation via district structures (Gardawski 2002). In the 1980s, there was a substantial number of 'autonomous' unions: approximately 4,000 local-level

trade unions (mostly operating in single enterprises) that were not affiliated with OPZZ (Upham 1992: 380).

For the sake of this article, the Organisational Department of OPZZ prepared the first aggregated information about the membership in the confederation (table 2). According to the full data, OPZZ lost about 3,000,000 in the 1990s and further 700,000 in 2000s. All in all, membership in OPZZ declined by almost 7.4 times between 1987, when it peaked at the level of 5,843,321, and 2011, when the confederation had 792,503 members (table 2). In 2011, there were 79 affiliates (including all types of supra-company trade unions). OPZZ affiliates represented about 9,074 company-level union organisations, which meant a significant decrease as compared with 87 founding members of OPZZ and 20,540 union organisations represented by the confederation in 1988. In 1989–2011, the average number of members per enterprise-level trade union declined three times, from 268 in 1989 to 87 in 2011. In a letter attached to the statistical data, Janusz Gołąb, who is responsible for organisational issues in OPZZ, wrote: 'I am convinced that the data presented (which are the first aggregated information about the number of members) will help ... scholars who deal with the problems of trade unions to verify their previous convictions about the OPZZ membership.' The data included in table 2 is individually gathered by the Organisational Department of OPZZ based on various sources, mostly on presentations during annual congresses of federations. They were not verified on the basis of additional documents as the latter were not provided by the federations. Thus, the data collection method was not safeguarded against overestimation. Recently, a method of systematic data collection on actual membership to federations was developed. However, the provision of this data is not obligatory for the federations and at least a part of them still avoids delivering any statistical data.

Table 2. Organisational development of the OPZZ (1984–2011)^a

Year	OPZZ membership	The number of enterprise-level unions affiliated to the OPZZ federations	The average number of members per enterprise-level trade union
1984	3,948,189	–	–
1985	5,274,491	23,624	223
1986	5,624,427	20,561	273
1987	5,843,321	21,582	271
1988	5,589,732	20,540	272
1989	5,236,072	19,537	268
1990	4,538,276	18,448	246
1991	3,576,110	17,792	201
1992	3,043,021	17,513	174

Year	OPZZ membership	The number of enterprise-level unions affiliated to the OPZZ federations	The average number of members per enterprise-level trade union
1993	2,667,032	17,212	155
1994	2,457,873	17,001	145
1995	2,300,687	16,890	136
1996	2,153,444	16,543	130
1997	2,001,050	16,247	123
1998	1,803,468	16,021	112
1999	1,603,837	15,942	101
2000	1,461,685	15,888	92
2001 ^b	1,067,873	11,999	89
2002	961,565	10,804	89
2003	902,853	10,260	88
2004	881,888	10,136	87
2005	874,086	10,047	87
2006	859,661	9,659	89
2007	846,872	9,515	89
2008	833,633	9,473	88
2009	821,712	9,338	88
2010	810,489	9,210	88
2011	792,503	9,074	87

^aThe data presented in the table 2 are collected by the organisational department of the OPZZ from various sources. Although the methods for systematic collection of data on membership in federations have been recently adopted by the confederation, they do not guarantee full complexity and accuracy of membership statistics gathered at the central level, as the federation are not obliged to disclose data to the confederation.

^b From 2001 on the figure reflects the vocationally active members (for the earlier years, all members are reported). Source: OPZZ internal statistics, data as of 31 December for each year.

Differently from Solidarity, the membership in trade unions affiliated to OPZZ is not linked to the payment of membership fees for OPZZ by individual members (the data from OPZZ and FZZ are estimates and cannot be compared with those from Solidarity, which are documented). According to the OPZZ status, the fee for the membership in the confederation is paid by the affiliated federations and, since 1994, by enterprise-level and inter-company trade unions which do not belong to the federations but to the regional (voivodeship) structures of OPZZ. Depending on the number of the declared members, trade unions have different rights, including the number of delegates for the OPZZ congresses. This is an important explanatory factor behind the floating number of the confederation's general volume of members. That is why the abovementioned ZNP, while actually having some quarter million members, reported only 70,000 to OPZZ in 2012.

The member organisations' reluctance to reveal the actual membership figures prompted by their desire to reduce their financial obligations to the national headquarters has a serious statistical impact on the whole of the confederation: in

2012 total membership figures reported by unions associated with OPZZ amounted to approximately 340,000, however, according to the internal estimates made by OPZZ itself, the true figure would be around 790,000. Furthermore, not all national-level OPZZ member organisations duly pay their contributions calculated for the 'official' (that is, lower than actual) number of members.

Until 2003 OPZZ maintained the level of membership dues for their affiliates at a very low level. In 2004, the level was set at PLN 0.20 per member, and in 2008 it was further raised up to PLN 0.30. At the time OPZZ introduced a rule, according to which the level of membership dues would be adjusted automatically in line with the wage indexation. As a result, in 2012 the fee amounted to PLN 0.35.

Nowadays, OPZZ is an all-grades multi-sector union confederation. According to its current statute, its members can be national-level trade unions, union federations, inter-company unions and company unions. Table 3 presents the membership in the branch structures of OPZZ at the individual and federations' levels.

Table 3. The Branch structure of OPZZ in 2011

Branches	Number of nation-wide member organisations	Number of members
1. Mining, chemicals and energy	16	126,122
2. Metal industry	3	71,501
3. Education and science	1	265,573
4. Public services	11	74,137
5. Food, agriculture and tourism	7	21,626
6. Construction, road mending and timber	3	22,149
7. Textiles, apparel and leather	1	9,363
8. Transport	20	68,663
9. Commerce, services, culture and art	17	97,962

Note: members of company and inter-company unions remaining outside of the national-level unions and federations are not included.

Source: Internal statistics of OPZZ, data as of December 2011.

The branch structures of OPZZ are represented by the Branch Councils. They represent nine branches: (1) mining, chemicals and energy, (2) the metal industry, (3) education and science, (4) public services, (5) food, agriculture and tourism, (6) construction, road mending and timber, (7) textiles, apparel and leather, (8) transport and (9) commerce, services, culture and art. However, inter-union coordination within branches is still rather limited. Internal reforms in 2000–2004, which were aimed at merging trade union federations within branches into a limited

number of unitary trade unions, failed due to strong internal opposition (Gardawski 2009a: 506–509). Special ‘thematic commissions’ play an advisory role on young people, women and public sector employees, and on specific areas of industrial relations (labour protection, international affairs, economic policy and social policy).

The affiliates of OPZZ encompass all-grade single-sector trade unions, white-collar single sector occupational unions, trade unions with the properties of professional associations, large all-grade inter-company unions in (formerly) state-owned nationwide enterprises and all-grade multi-sector unions. Although it is difficult to precisely evaluate the relative importance of various types of unions belonging to the confederation, one particular union dominates all other members in numerical terms. Związek Nauczycielstwa Polskiego (ZNP, Polish Teachers’ Union) has more than 250,000 members.

The Independent Self-governing Trade Union Solidarity (NSZZ ‘Solidarność’)

The structure of Solidarity also reflects its historical development. Solidarity was historically based on a territorial structure, which distinguished it from ZZZ and OPZZ. The territorial structure made it possible not only to retain a vital link with local communities during the strike action in 1980, but also to avoid internal union conflicts along sectoral lines (Keenoy 1986: 154). The internal rules of Solidarity in 1980 initially privileged larger enterprises. Workers in enterprises which employed more than 500 employees could establish a union branch; workers in smaller enterprises were expected to form an inter-company union (Keenoy 1986: 150), an organisation which is active in two or more companies. Company and inter-company union branches elected regional delegates, which subsequently elected delegates to the National Congress.

Today, the principal organisation of the union is based on the hierarchy of company-level union organisations, inter-company union organisations and regional branches. In addition, there are ‘departmental union organisations’ (organizacje oddziałowe) which can be created on the basis of company-level union organisations. Some departmental union organisations lost their independent status as the result of organisational changes in the structure of an enterprise, for instance in the wake

of the mergers of several companies into a new enterprise⁷. However, there are instances of the creation of departmental union organisations in large multinational enterprises, as in hypermarkets for instance. In December 2008, for which the last full data is available, Solidarity consisted of 8,646 basic union organisations, including 6,544 company-level organisations, 1,527 inter-company union organisations and 575 departmental union organisations. The number of union organisations has declined since 1992 (see table 4). The years 2006–2008 brought some signs of a reversal of this negative trend. However, as the most recent data shows, this tendency has not been stable. In 2009–2011, most likely as the result of company closures in the course of a global recession, a new decline in the number of union organisations in Solidarity was observed. It needs to be added that due to its internal structure NSZZ Solidarność is the only (large) trade union which has precise membership statistics.

In 2011, for the first time since 1989 the number of Solidarity members grew. All in all, between 1991 and 2011 the number of the Solidarity members declined 3.4 times, from 2,246,119 to 667,500; this was much lesser than in the case of OPZZ which membership in the same time declined 4.5 times. It should also be noted that the average membership per Solidarity has also been much lower than in the case of OPZZ and its decline was also less visible.

Table 4. Organisational development of Solidarity (1991–2011)

Year	Number of members	Number of organisations	Member average per organisation
1991	2,246,119	–	–
1992	1,660,761	16,992	98
1993	1,507,084	15,367	98
1994	1,422,764	14,302	99
1995	1,312,050	12,437	105
1996	1,233,209	13,691	90
1997	1,118,229	13,271	84
1998	1,113,440	12,822	87
1999	1,075,045	12,668	85
2000	1,018,439	12,240	83
2001	910,398	11,570	79
2002	800,906	10,522	76
2003	759,336	9,950	76

⁷ By virtue of an amendment to the union statute passed in 2004, a local union organisation (*terenowa organizacja związku*) could be established and acquired the status of intercompany union organisation. The latter modification made it possible to unionise workers in small enterprises, in which the creation of company-level union organisations was constrained due to problems achieving the legally required membership threshold of 10 people required to establish a trade union of.

Year	Number of members	Number of organisations	Member average per organisation
2004	730,919	9,392	78
2005	721,356	9,114	79
2006	690,042	8,106	85
2007	685,329	8,637	79
2008	679,975	8,648	79
2009	667,572	8,445	79
2010	648,868	8,292	78
2011	667,500	8,035	83

Source: Internal statistics of Solidarity, data as of December for each year except June 2010.

At the outset, Solidarity consisted of 38 regions. Its territorial structure did not parallel the administrative division of the country, but the importance of regions as centres of collective mobilisation in 1980. This historical structure, including both very large and very small 'regions', was largely preserved after 1989. In the 1990s, one new region was created and five merged with other regions. While part of the regional and national leadership acknowledges the need for organisational changes, internal reforms are difficult due to the resistance of the leaders of small regions, whose votes cannot be ignored by any candidate to national-level executive structures of the union (Gardawski 2009a: 504). In terms of numbers of delegates to national conventions, the most influential regions were and remain Dąbrowskie Basin and Upper Silesia (Śląsko-Dąbrowski), Małopolska (Cracow), Mazowsze (Warsaw), Lower Silesia (Wrocław), Wielkopolska (Poznań) and Gdańsk. Their relevance reflects high union membership, which can be explained by their geographical scope and, in some cases (such as Śląsko-Dąbrowski), high concentration of traditional heavy industry, such as mining and steelworking, in their areas of operation.

Similar to OPZZ, Solidarity is an all-grade multi-sector trade union confederation associating all kinds of occupations. However, it does not encompass other union federations, but only company-level union organisations federated into a unitary union organisation at the regional level, branch level and national level. Local unions have the same name, symbols and statutes as the central board. There are currently 15 branch secretariats of the union, which are in turn divided into 86 national branch sections (sekcje krajowe). Some national branch sections existed already in the 1980s. However, it was not until the beginning of the 1990s that they were unified into national branch secretariats following the resolution of the National Convention of Delegates in May 1991, which granted them separate legal status. The need to create these formalised structures followed from the fact that the territorial structure of

Solidarity was inappropriate to deal with the capitalist restructuring of particular industries (Pollert 1999: 159).

Table 5. Branch secretariats of Solidarity and their membership in 2006 and 2011

Name	Membership 2006	Membership 2011 (end of the year)
Sekretariat Banków, Handlu i Ubezpieczeń (Secretariat of Banks, Commerce and Insurance of Solidarity)	16,421	20,077
Sekretariat Budownictwa i Przemysłu Drzewnego (Construction and Wood Workers' Secretariat)	10,868	8,220
Sekretariat Górnictwa i Energetyki (National Secretariat of Mine and Energy Workers Union)	87,119	83,961
Sekretariat Kultury i Środków Przekazu (Media and Entertainment Workers' Secretariat)	5,378	4,419
Sekretariat Łączności (Postal and Telecommunication Workers' Secretariat)	21,813	17,462
Sekretariat Metalowców (Metalworkers' Secretariat)	64,177	50,227
Sekretariat Nauki i Oświaty (Science and Education Secretariat)	79,053	67,962
Sekretariat Ochrony Zdrowia (Health Care Secretariat)	43,689	40,876
Sekretariat Przemysłu Chemicznego (Chemical Workers' Secretariat)	29,966	27,870
Sekretariat Przemysłu Lekkiego (Textile Workers' Secretariat)	2,234	Liquidated as Secretariat ^a
Sekretariat Przemysłu Spożywczego (Food Workers' Secretariat)	19,884	15,082
Sekretariat Rolnictwa (Rural Workers' Secretariat)	4,269	2,998
Sekretariat Służb Publicznych (Public Service Workers' Secretariat)	29,787	29,934
Sekretariat Zasobów Naturalnych, Ochrony Środowiska i Leśnictwa (National Secretariat of Natural Resources, Environmental Protection and Forestry)	4,650	4,365
Sekretariat Transportowców (Transport Workers' Secretariat)	52,509	46,342

^a In 2010 the Textile Workers' Secretariat was transformed into a Section and integrated within the Chemical Industry Secretariat.

Note: Alphabetical order.

Branch structures are both financially and organisationally disadvantaged as compared to territorial structures. Regarding membership contributions, 60 per cent remains at plant-level trade union organisations, 25 per cent is allocated to regional structures and 10 per cent goes to the national central structure, of which only 2 per cent is given to branch trade union structures. Additionally, while membership of regional structures is obligatory for company-level unions, their participation in the

branch structures is not. As a result, in 2011 the membership in branch secretariats (419,795 members) amounted to 62 per cent of the total membership of Solidarity. There are 15 branch secretariats, a separate national secretariat of pensioners and four 'sections' outside the secretariats⁸. It is worth noting that the only secretariat, in which membership increase was observed in 2006–2011, was the Secretariat of Banks, Commerce and Insurance of Solidarity. This might be considered a positive sign reflecting the effectiveness of trade union organising campaign undertaken in the commerce sector by the Union Development Office of Solidarity since the late 1990s (Czarzasty 2010). The most numerous branches in Solidarity include heavy industry (20 per cent of the total membership in branch secretariats), education (16 per cent), metal industry (12 per cent) and transport industry (11 per cent).

The highest decision-making body of Solidarity is Krajowy Zjazd Delegatów (KZD, National Congress of Delegates), elected by delegates to the regional assemblies. Decision-making bodies at the territorial level are the general assemblies of regional delegates elected at company and intercompany levels, and at the branch level, the congresses of secretariats. The executive units are the councils at the company level (komisja zakładowa, company committee), regional level (Zarząd Regionu, Regional Board), branch level (rada sekretariatu, Secretariat Council) and national level (Komisja Krajowa, the National Commission), all elected for four-year terms. The highest executive unit, Komisja Krajowa, is constituted by the regional leaders, leaders of branch secretariats and members elected by the National Assembly of Delegates. The control units (audit committees) have a comparable branch-territorial structure, too. There were 115 employees at the head office of Solidarity in 2006 (Czarzasty 2006).

The fragmentation of OPZZ meant that some union federations disaffiliated from the confederation or began to create smaller trade unions on an occupational basis. In the case of a unitary union such as Solidarity, fragmentation was synonymous with establishing breakaway unions on the basis of factions, which had its roots in the movement of the 1980s. In 1991, Solidarity '80 was established by Solidarity activists who did not accept the agreements reached by the Round Table. In 1993, two other trade unions broke away from Solidarity '80, Chrześcijański Związek Zawodowy im. Ks. J. Popiełuszki (ChZZ, Popiełuszko Christian Trade Union Solidarity) and Wolny Związek Zawodowy 'Sierpień '80' (WZZ Sierpień '80, Free Trade Union August' 80),

⁸ The four 'sections' outside secretariats include: the National Section of Invalids, the National Section of Blind People, the National Section of the Civilian Workers of the Ministry of Defence, and the National Section of Women.

both initially connected with right-wing nationalist parties. While ChZZ nearly disappeared from the trade union scene, WZZ Sierpień '80 gradually changed its political orientation to one of radical left-wing social movement unionism. The spin-offs from Solidarity remain all-grade multi-sector trade unions, whose internal structures mainly resembled Solidarity.

Another source of the fragmentation of the union movement was the foundation of new trade unions, not historically connected with OPZZ and Solidarity. Most of these remained company-level and inter-company unions, while others established new national-level federations. Larger national-level federations, which were not affiliated to the two main trade unions in the 1990s and which membership exceeded 10,000 by the late 1990s (Kozek 2003: 19) included (1) multi-sector occupational unions; (2) white-collar unions; (3) single sector occupational unions and staff associations; and (4) professional associations with the functions of trade unions.

The Trade Unions Forum (FZZ)

Consolidation attempts undertaken by some independent trade unions led to the establishment of the third trade union, Forum Związków Zawodowych (FZZ, Trade Unions Forum), in 2002. The idea of establishing FZZ crystallised during the 1990s, when social democratic intellectuals, together with the leaders of some independent trade unions and trade unions which had broken away from OPZZ and Solidarity, launched Trade Union Forum of Labour (Związkowe Forum Pracy). The Forum was founded under the auspices of Labour Union (UP, Unia Pracy), a social democratic party organised by former left-wing activists of Solidarity and reformers from the former communist party. Initially, it was thought to be an advisory body for trade unions. From within the UP the idea of forming a new trade union confederation emerged (Gardawski 2009a: 491–492). In particular, there were two main incentives to form such a new union structure out of the rather informal Forum: (1) the exclusion of unions which acted outside Solidarity and OPZZ from their share of the property of former official confederation ZZZ, and (2) the Act on Tripartite Commission of 2001, which established criteria for national-level representativeness at 300,000 members, a threshold which smaller unions could attain only through consolidation (Gardawski 2009a: 493).

The largest of the 17 founding members of FZZ included: Ogólnopolski Związek Pielęgniarek i Położnych (OZZPiP, National Trade Union of Nurses and Midwives),

NSZZ Policjantów (Independent Selfgoverning Union of Police Officers), Federacja Związków Zawodowych Pracowników PKP (FZZP PKP, Federation of Trade Unions of Polish State Railways), Związek Zawodowy Inżynierów i Techników (ZZIiT, Trade Union of Engineers and Technicians), Porozumienie Związków Zawodowych 'Kadra' (PZZ 'Kadra', Trade Unions Alliance 'Kadra'), Krajowy Związek Zawodowy Ciepłowników (KZZC, Trade Union of Heating Technicians) and Solidarity '80.

Similar to OPZZ and Solidarity, FZZ is an all-grade multi-sector trade union confederation. FZZ affiliates include national-level union federations, inter-company union organisations and single-company trade unions. The national-level trade unions in FZZ are single-sector and multi-sector trade unions, white-collar occupational unions and craft unions (railway engine drivers). There are trade unions of workers in transport (bus drivers, truck drivers, employees of Polish State Railways, officers and marines in the navy, fishermen), state security (border guards, police officers, fire-fighters), health care (nurses and midwives, health care administration, physiotherapists), telecommunications, education, social security, state administration, aviation, communal services and public libraries. The members of FZZ also include all-grade national union federations (such as Solidarity '80), intercompany trade unions and company-level unions in large Polish and multinational enterprises. The number of FZZ member organisations has grown in recent years, from 17 in 2002 to 78 in 2012. FZZ is predominantly the confederation of trade unions active in the public services, with the most numerous representation in health care (27 per cent of the total membership), manufacturing and construction (22 per cent), transportation (21 per cent).

According to the confederation, as of 2011 it included (via their member organisations at central and enterprise levels) roughly 409,000 members. The high level of autonomy of the FZZ affiliates makes it difficult to collect data on continuous basis. It is one of the reasons why the FZZ representatives supplied us with approximate data only (table 6).

The survey data of the Public Opinion Research Centre suggest that FZZ membership is stable. One possible explanation of this is the fact that the union represents public sector employees whose trade union activism was reinvigorated by austerity measures and restructuring in the second decade of systemic transformation (Hardy 2009; Kozek 2011).

Table 6. Membership in FZZ organisation by branches of the economy

Branches	2002			2006			2010			2012*		
	A	B	C	A	B	C	A	B	C	A	b	C
Railways, road, sea, air	8	3	86,372	9	6	9,2513	12	10	84,833	12	11	84,901
Public services	1	0	50,896	4	0	72,999	4	0	70,775	4	0	70,775
Health-care	3	0	88,885	6	7	96,106	6	12	109,106	6	13	109,158
Science, education and culture	1	0	1,042	2	1	2,096	4	1	4,773	4	1	4,773
Financial services and insurance	1	0	1,027	1	1	1,533	1	2	2,849	1	2	2,849
Telecommunications and postal services	3	0	7,326	2	1	6,492	3	1	9,921	3	1	9,921
Industry	6	0	9,7137	6	8	96,955	6	12	89,477	6	13	89,597
Civil services	4	0	36,266	6	0	32,608	6	2	29,524	6	2	29,524
Agriculture, fishing, environmental protection	1	0	2,082	1	0	1,572	2	3	6,533	2	4	6,597
Total	28	3	371,033	37	24	40,2874	44	43	407,791	44	47	408,095

Note: A – Nation-wide union organisations; B – Company and inter-company union organisations; C – Number of members.

Source: Statistics prepared and disclosed to the authors by the FZZ headquarters; data as of 30 June 2012.

The internal structure of FZZ is decentralised and – due to the relatively recent establishment of the confederation itself – still under construction. The highest statutory body of the confederation is the National Congress, which elects the main union board (Zarząd Główny), the presidium of the union (led by the president and vice-presidents), and the national audit committee (Krajowa Komisja Rewizyjna) for the four-year term. Congress delegates are elected by member organisations, which have the right to send three delegates plus one more delegate for every 10,000 members. All member organisations also have the right to one seat in the Union Board; its five additional members are elected by the National Congress. Out of three main trade unions, FZZ has the lowest number of full-time employees at its the headquarters: there were only eight in 2006 (Czarzasty 2006). FZZ is organised on the basis of regional structures, which overlap with voivodeships (16 regions). It also used to have six branch structures: (1) communication, (2) education, science and culture, (3) health care, (4) manufacturing and environmental protection, (5) public services and (6) transportation, as well as a specialist committee dealing with labour protection. Since 2009, however, branch structures have ceased to exist due to insufficient resources or a lack of will to develop them further. Regional

structures are led by locally elected regional boards and regional presidia; the number of candidates to regional boards nominated by member organisations reflects the number of members they have in the region. In practice, neither branch structures nor regional structures have full-time union officials. The reason is constant budget constraints, which reflects the extremely low contributions of affiliates to the confederation.

Union Membership and Union Density

Political change in Poland altered the nature of trade union membership. Although instances of being forced to join an 'official' trade union were exceptional under state socialism, membership was expected, in particular in large state-owned companies. The end of state socialism made trade unions entirely voluntary organisations. With regard to 'general rights and interests', trade unions are obliged to represent all employees, regardless of their union membership; as far as 'individual labour relations' are concerned, they represent the interests of their members (Article 7 of the Trade Unions Act).

In line with other state socialist countries, high union density in the People's Republic of Poland until the 1980s reflected both the extensive functions of trade unions in distributing welfare and benefits within companies and unwritten rules that made union membership in the public sector semi-automatic for the vast majority of employees. According to data quoted by the International Directory of the Trade Union Movement, ZZZ, the only trade union confederation that was allowed to exist between 1949 and 1980, had 12,334,300 members in 1975 (Coldrick and Jones 1979). Taking into account the number of employees at this time (16,800,000), this would indicate a union density of 73 per cent of the working population. However, the estimate – based on official data – should be approached cautiously. First, the number of employees included in official statistics, on the basis of which trade union density is calculated, included also individual farmers, who were not eligible to become trade union members. If we take into account paid employees in the dominant state-controlled sector only, the level of participation in trade unions could have been as high as 90 per cent. Second, self-reported membership figures collected at the time are certainly distorted. ZZZ and the affiliated trade union federations were interested in documenting higher membership than they actually had.

According to data announced at its first National Congress (in October 1981), Solidarity had over 9,000,000 members [Kurczewski 2006 (1981): 113], but 'membership figures were also [instruments to be wielded] in the inter-regional political competition within Solidarity itself', which means they were likely to be overestimated. According to the above mentioned more precise data provided by Upham (1992: 375), Solidarity had 9,500,000 members, Rural Solidarity had) 2,350,000 members and official and autonomous trade unions 3,000,000 members (in 1981).

Although some historical records exist in regards to the membership in NSZZ Solidarność over time, estimating union membership in other trade unions in Poland is a difficult task, since no official statistics are collected by state institutions and a considerable number of trade unions do not have systematic membership records. Thus, we can only rely on the scattered and incomplete self-reported data of unions and the existing survey data. The most comprehensive and credible comparative survey data on the subject is provided by the Centrum Badiania Opinii Społecznej (CBOS, Public Opinion Research Centre). Although CBOS surveys are not available for 1981, a retrospective question asked in 1984 revealed that 28 per cent of adults declared that they belonged to NSZZ Solidarity in 1980–1981, 22 per cent to official unions (former ZZZ) and 3 per cent to autonomous unions (other than NSZZ Solidarity). As estimated by Wenzel (2009: 534–535), these figures translate into between 6,600,000 and 8,000,000 members of NSZZ Solidarity and approximately 5,700,000 members of branch unions that remained after the dissolution of ZZZ. The membership of official unions was probably overestimated since some members of 'autonomous' unions might not have been aware that their unions had broken away from ZZZ in 1980. Overall union density among the employed amounted to about 65 per cent.

CBOS data from 1984–1989 indicates that the share of adults who were trade union members increased from 20 per cent to 24 per cent by 1987 and then began to fall (to 22 per cent in 1989)⁹. The average union density for these years was 38 per cent of the employed – that is, about 6,000,000. However, actual trade union density might have been higher. It is difficult to estimate the share of interviewees who belonged to Solidarity, but did not answer positively a general question about trade union membership. In 1985, 14 per cent of interviewees replied positively to the question about membership of 'new unions' (OPZZ), which would indicate that there

⁹ CBOS surveys were based on a national representative sample of the adult (18+) population and not on a sample of employees. As these are the only comparable data available for the analysis of historical developments, we are forced to refer to the population of 'adults' as well, which is unusual in industrial relations research.

Table 7. Declared union membership as percentage of adult population (+18), union density as percentage of dependent labour force, CBOS survey data estimation, 1990–2012 (measurement error +/- 3 per cent)

Year		Total	Solidarity	OPZZ	Trade Unions Forum	Other unions	Trade union density ^a per cent
1990	per cent	22	15	6	–	1	36
	N (about)	5,946,000	4,054,000	1,622,000	–	270,000	
1991	per cent	19	10	6	–	3	33
	N (about)	5,136,000	2,703,000	1,622,000	–	811,000	
1992	per cent	16	6	6	–	4	30
	N (about)	4,359,000	1,635,000	1,635,000	–	1,090,000	
1993	per cent	10	5	3	–	2	19
	N (about)	2,747,000	1,374,000	824,000	–	549,000	
1994	per cent	14	5	5	–	4	27
	N (about.)	3,881,000	1,386,000	1,386,000	–	1,109,000	
1995	per cent	11	6	3	–	2	20
	N (about)	3,010,000	1,642,000	821,000	–	547,000	
1996	per cent	11	5	3	–	3	21
	N (about)	3,104,000	1,411,000	847,000	–	847,000	
1999	per cent	11	5	3	–	3	21
	N (about)	3,194,000	1,452,000	871,000	–	871,000	
2000	per cent	9	4	3	–	2	17
	N (about.)	2,603,000	1,157,000	868,000	–	578,000	
2001	per cent	8	3	2	–	3	16
	N (about)	2,356,000	884,000	589,000	–	884,000	
2002	per cent	6	2	2	–	2	14
	N (about)	1,765,000	588,000	588,000	–	588,000	
2003	per cent	8	3	2	1	2	19
	N (about)	2,375,000	891,000	594,000	297,000	594,000	
2004	per cent	8	3	2	1	2	19
	N (about.)	2,397,000	899,000	599,000	300,000	599,000	
2005	per cent	9	3	2	1	3	21
	N (about)	2,726,000	909,000	606,000	303,000	909,000	
2006	per cent	7	3	1	1	2	17
	N (about)	2,133,000	914,000	305,000	305,000	609,000	
2007	per cent	6	2	2	1	2	16
	N (about.)	1,838,000	613,000	613,000	306,000	613,000	
2008	per cent	6	2	1	1	2	15
	N (about)	1,849,000	616,000	308,000	308,000	616,000	
2010	per cent	7	3	1	1	2	20
	N (about)	2,174,000	932,000	311,000	311,000	621,000	
2012	per cent	6	2	2	1	1	17
	N (about)	1,864,000	621,000	621,000	311,000	311,000	

^a Note: no data for 1997 and 1998 (the surveys were not conducted). The decline in the share of 'Other union members' in 2012 can be explained by the fact that 2012 the respondents who declared membership in 'other unions' were asked for the first time to give the number of their unions. It appeared that some of trade unions mentioned by them were in fact the OPZZ or FZZ affiliates. Statistical error for the Public Opinion Research Centre Surveys is 3%. Recalculated by the authors. Adequate calculation for 2012 is not yet possible due to the lack of demographic and labour market data for the whole year. For 2012, we took into account the approximate number of 31,000,000 adults in calculating union membership.

Source: Public Opinion Research Centre report BS/109/2010, BS/52/2012 and Wenzel (2009: 539) and Główny Urząd Statystyczny (GUS Central Statistical Office, www.stat.gov.pl) for the size of the adult population and the labour force (average for the reference years).

were about 4,000,000 members of this confederation at this time. For obvious reasons, have been higher. It is difficult to estimate the share of interviewees who belonged to Solidarity, but did not answer positively a general question about trade union membership. In 1985, 14 per cent of interviewees replied positively to the question about membership in 'new unions' (OPZZ), what would indicate that there were about 4,000,000 members of this confederation at this time. For obvious reasons, no question about membership of the illegal Solidarity was asked. It can be assumed that the underground Solidarity might have accounted for about 6–7 per cent of adults – in other words, up to 2,000,000 people – at this time (Wenzel 2009: 536). The decrease in union density in the 1980s can be explained by the general withdrawal from public activities under the martial law (1981–1983), the ongoing ban on Solidarity and the distrust to OPZZ, which was identified by some workers as the confederation that remained largely subordinated to the Communist Party (PZPR). It should be noted that almost half of those who declared membership in OPZZ at this time were also PZPR members.

The CBOS data quoted in table 7 needs to be read jointly with the data presented in tables 2, 4, 5 and 6. Let us assume that the CBOS measurements reflected in table 7 concern 100 per cent of union membership. The comparison of tables 2, 4, 5 and 6 reveals some peculiarities. From 1985 till 1989 (table 2) OPZZ declared that it had slightly more members than it followed from the CBOS data (between 130 per cent and 145 per cent). However, in autumn 1989 the differences between self-declared membership and the CBOS data increased up to 287 per cent and remained at the level of 152–235 per cent in the years 1990–2010. In the case of the FZZ (table 6) the differences were about 140 per cent. In the case of NSZZ Solidarity, the situation was generally different (table 5). The CBOS data was very close to the trade union's statistics. If any divergences appeared, the survey data (CBOS) revealed higher membership than the one declared by NSZZ Solidarity. On these grounds we assumed that in the case of OPZZ and FZZ much more credible are the CBOS data than membership statistics collected by these confederations. We asked experts from the OPZZ office to comment on data when we were preparing the final version of the article. We received the following answer: 'We are aware in OPZZ that we are neck and neck with Solidarity. It is true that when trade union fee was very low, when it was PLN 0,02, federations overstated their membership to get more places in the presidium and it pushed them up. It is the reason why we had so much fluctuation in our statistics: when we approached congress, membership numbers grew and declined afterwards'.

The Polish trade union movement experienced a dramatic decline in membership after the systemic change. The re-registration of Solidarity in 1989 initially meant a sharp increase in the number of union members, however. According to CBOS data, the coverage of Solidarity affiliates grew from 7 per cent of adults (in May 1989) to 15 per cent (in November 1989 and February 1990), while membership in OPZZ decreased sharply from 15 per cent to 9 per cent of adults between May and November 1989, falling further to 6 per cent in February 1990 (Wenzel 2009: 537–540). It should be noted, however, that a declaration of Solidarity membership at this time did not necessarily mean trade union participation, but could also indicate involvement in the political activities of Solidarity-supported Civic Committees. Furthermore, the parallel increase in declared Solidarity membership and the shrinking of OPZZ should not necessarily be interpreted as a shift between the two unions. At the time, Solidarity was attracting many new followers driven by political motives, who did not particularly care for the trade union aspect of the movement, while many members fled OPZZ in an attempt to distance themselves from the former official unions (commonly associated with the *ancien regime*) or were simply not particularly interested in belonging to any trade union.

Between 1990 and 2010, estimated union density in Poland fell from 36 per cent to 20 per cent of employees (see table 7). The deunionisation process proceeded at an uneven pace: there were periods marked by sharp decreases in union membership, followed by relatively quiet periods during which the unionisation level remained relatively steady. The initial phase of rapid membership decline took place between 1990 and 1993. The sudden shrinking of the membership base is often interpreted as a result of the working class becoming disillusioned with the reluctance of trade unions to actively articulate and represent labour's collective interests (Wenzel 2009), symbolised by the 'umbrella' held over economic reforms by Solidarity. Nevertheless, there is another explanation, according to which the fall in union membership in the 1990s was due mainly to privatisation (Gardawski et al. 1999). In the years that followed, however, deunionisation slowed down. In the late 1990s, declared membership remained at 20 per cent. The second wave of accelerating deunionisation began in 2000. As highlighted above, the return of Solidarity to parliamentary politics and its rise to power (1997) are usually identified as the probable cause of accelerating deunionisation (Gardawski et al. 1999).

Taking into account the total size of the labour force and the declared trade union membership in the adult population, it is possible to estimate trade union density for 1980–2010 (table 8). However, when assessing the quality of such data, one must bear in mind the limitations of the CBOS survey methodology (statistical sampling error

of +/- 3 per cent) and the Labour Force Surveys used in Poland. Our calculations suggest that after the significant drop in union presence among employees on the eve of the new century, union density continued to fall much slower and recently stabilised at 15–20 per cent, taking into account the possible error in this kind of estimations. In practice, it is safe to say that there were between 1,500,000 and 2,400,000 trade union members in Poland in 2010. In fact, the higher level estimation is more reliable taking into account that the sum of the declared membership in three largest nationwide trade unions (NSZZ Solidarnosc, OPZZ and FZZ, see tables 2, 4 and 6) is 1,870,000 members. Only this figure would give around 15 per cent trade union density in 2011 (the number of employees in the fourth quarter of 2011 equalled 12,568,000). If we add to this approximately 300,000–600,000 of ‘other’ trade union members (1–2 per cent of the adult population according to the CBOS surveys), trade union density in Poland can be safely estimated at the level of 17–20 per cent, which confirms our calculations in table 7. The comparison of the CBOS surveys estimates and declared membership in the main trade unions is presented in table 8.

In addition, it seems worthwhile to mention that representative social partners organisations at the central level had to undergo a representativity screening procedure before the court of law in the first half of 2012. As far as trade unions are concerned, minimum 300,000 members have to be reported, so the organisation can preserve the status of a representative social partners organisation, and, as a consequence, retain a seat in the Tripartite Commission. All three nation-wide trade unions passed the procedure successfully: Forum ZZ reported 300,452 members, OPZZ – 536,231, and Solidarity – 667,572, respectively. According to our knowledge, the unions focused on collecting membership data from their major member organisations or regional units.

Table 8. Trade union membership: internal statistics and the CBOS survey estimations (measurement error +/-3 per cent)

Trade union	Declared membership (internal statistics) (year)	Membership among adults (%) in 2012	Estimated membership (CBOS surveys) in 2012
Solidarity	667,500 (2011)	2	621,000
OPZZ	792,503 (2011)	2	621,000
FZZ	408,095 (2012)	1	311,000
Other unions	No data	1	311,000
Total	Minimum 1,868,098	6	1,864,000

Source: Public Opinion Research Centre report BS/52/2012, authors' calculations and internal union statistics.

There are both structural and cultural-institutional reasons for the deunionisation trend. On the one hand, Polish unions suffered from the rapid expansion of economic sectors and work organisations were specifically hostile to organised labour. The Polish development of ‘disorganised’ capitalism was additionally buttressed by statutory support for flexible labour¹⁰, very high unemployment (until 2005) and the importance of the grey economy, which attracted 9.4 per cent of all employed persons, according to data from 2004 [GUS (Central Statistical Office) 2005]. On the other hand, the public sector remained a ‘union-friendly’ territory to a certain degree. Private domestic enterprises still appeared reluctant to grant organised employee representation, but private enterprises with foreign capital displayed a more encouraging attitude towards trade unions (Gardawski 2009b). Unions were reportedly present in 61 per cent of public companies, 8 per cent of private domestic enterprises and 33 per cent of private enterprises with foreign capital. The unionisation levels were 62 per cent, 8 per cent and 37 per cent, respectively (Gardawski 2009b).

In addition to structural and cultural-institutional reasons the decline in union membership was also an outcome of union strategies (Crowley and Ost 2001; Ost 2005). In the 1990s, these strategies combined inaction, cooperative support for workplace restructuring with occasional discontent and contestation (Gardawski 2001: 297). In the case of OPZZ, the end of merely nominal membership after 1989 and the confederation’s wait-and-see attitude in the 1990s seemed to be two major factors that contributed to membership losses. In the case of Solidarity, decreasing membership had more to do with involvement in market reforms, which brought about painful consequences for Solidarity (cf. Ost 2005). Solidarity membership decreased sharply in the first years of transformation and in 1999–2001, when trade unions assumed co-responsibility for four large political reforms¹¹. After the beginning of 2000, however, membership of all three trade unions has stabilised. As documented by qualitative research (Gardawski 2001; Meardi 2007; Mrozowicki et al. 2010), this stabilisation might be a result of new trade union organising strategies which had their first success in terms of membership growth in some sectors (large

¹⁰ Poland is in the top of the EU rankings in terms of the share of employees with fixed-term contracts out of total employees (27.3 per cent in 2010, Eurostat data). Fixed-term employees have proved to be very difficult to unionise. An even more difficult task is to organise workers employed under the provisions of specific-task agreements and fee-for-task agreements. As they are not considered ‘employees’ under Polish labour law, they cannot be trade union members.

¹¹ Reform of public administration, education, health care and pensions, aimed, among other things, at improving the quality of public services by partial marketisation and commercialisation.

retail stores, security services and the automotive sector). However, due to the novelty of these strategies, their precise effects are still difficult to evaluate.

Given the incompleteness of self-reported data from the unions, it is also extremely difficult to be precise about changes in the membership of union federations associated with OPZZ and FZZ and the development of the membership of non-affiliated unions. Nevertheless, one tendency is particularly notable. In terms of membership growth, we can observe relative success on the part of some trade union federations and supra-company unitary unions based on the representation of narrow, occupational interests. The emergence of these organisations in the 1990s reflected a growing disappointment with large, politically embedded Union of Trade Unions, in which the interests of narrower occupational groups could not be adequately heard. Good examples are PZZ Kadra, which associates supervisory workers in heavy industry (mainly in mining) and the National Union of Nurses and Midwives (OZZPiP). Established in 1996; its' membership increased in the wake of militant protest actions against the low pay and deteriorating working conditions of nurses and midwives. Another example of a successful trade union focus on single occupations (although extending its potential membership to others) is the largest affiliate of OPZZ, the Polish Teachers' Union, ZNP about 250,000 members. In general, new and reformed trade unions representing narrow occupational interests have managed much better in terms of membership in the public sector than in the private sector. However, it should be remembered that many of them were created by breaking away from existing larger union federations and confederations. As a result, overall union density did not increase.

As far as the socio-demographic characteristics of Polish unionists are concerned, representative sociological research and survey data allow us to note some changes in the composition of the union movement in terms of gender, age, education and occupation (Gardawski et. al 1999; Wenzel 2009). Until the late 1990s, the share of men in the trade union movement was much higher than that of women. However, the deteriorating position of women after 1989, their growing aspirations and the outflow of male craftsmen from unions opened the way for the emergence of a new wave of women unionists (Hardy et al. 2008; Stenning and Hardy 2005). In the CBOS survey conducted in 1991, 23 per cent of male employees and 15 per cent of female employees declared that they were trade union members. In contrast, in 2012 the share of men and women in trade unions was much more even: 13 per cent of the male employees and 11 per cent of female employees belonged to trade unions.

Despite women's grassroots union activism (Stenning and Hardy 2005; Mrozowicki and Trawinska 2012), the leadership of the main trade unions is still predominantly male. In Solidarity, there are six women among 99 members of the National Committee and one woman in the six-person Presidium of the National Committee (as of 2010). OPZZ and FZZ are slightly more 'feminised'. One reason for this is the presence of two large trade unions with high female membership: Ogólnopolski Związek Zawodowy Pielęgniarek i Położnych (OZZPiP, the National Union of Nurses and Midwives, affiliated to FZZ) and Związek Nauczycielstwa Polskiego (ZNP, Polish Teachers' Union). In OPZZ, there are 22 women among the 95 members of the OPZZ Council, three women among 29 members of OPZZ Presidium and a female deputy president. In FZZ, there are two women in the 12-person union Presidium, 13 women in the 70-person Union Council and a woman deputy president.

During the initial period of 1980–1981, Solidarity recruited much younger workers than the 'official' trade unions (former ZZZ), which in turn had twice as many pensioners. Although the generational division between Solidarity and OPZZ persisted into the 1990s (Gardawski et al., 1999; Wenzel 2009), it is less visible today. CBOS survey data suggest that Polish trade unions are best represented among middle-aged employees. Young people very rarely join trade unions. In 1991, 5 per cent of adults aged 18–24 and 19 per cent aged 25–34 declared that they were trade union members. In 2007, the share of unionists among interviewees aged 25–34 dropped to 11 per cent, and in the same edition of the survey no single younger interviewee stated that he or she belonged to a union (Wenzel 2007). In 2007, the average union member was 43 years old (Gardawski 2009b). Out of the three main national trade unions, OPZZ emerged as the 'oldest' (average member aged 49), FZZ was shown to recruit relatively younger employees (the age of average member amounted to 40), while Solidarity ranked in between, with an average age of 43. However, a survey carried out two years later (2009) on a large sample of nearly 30,000 produced slightly different results in terms of the age of union members: OPZZ was still the 'oldest' confederation (average age of 46), followed by Solidarity (45 years), while 'other' unions averaged 47 years of age (FZZ was not mentioned) (Kucharski 2009). The share of pensioners who declared their membership of trade unions declined from 10 per cent in 1987 to 2 per cent in 2007 (CBOS data; Wenzel 2007, 2009). Since all large trade unions allow pensioners to keep their membership after retirement, this drop should be accounted

for voluntary withdrawal¹². The unemployed are very rarely trade union members in Poland: the trade union leaders interviewed for this study claimed that the latter represent only a tiny fraction of union members. As most trade union activities are focused on the workplace level, the unemployed have little incentive to become or to remain union members.

During the past two decades, changes in the occupational profile of unionised employees have also been observed. In the mid-1980s, according to the CBOS survey of 1987, the most unionised categories were mid-ranking white-collar workers (46 per cent) and blue-collar workers (40 per cent). Lower unionisation was noted among semi-skilled workers in services (33 per cent) and engineers and managers (29 per cent). Blue-collar workers were twice as likely to join Solidarity as 'official' trade unions (according to a retrospective question asked in the CBOS survey in 1984). According to the CBOS data of 1991 (Wenzel 2009), Solidarity had almost three times more members among skilled blue-collar workers and more members among semi-skilled workers in services than OPZZ. OPZZ, in turn, had more members than Solidarity among mid-ranking managers and professionals. This general difference between Solidarity and OPZZ still persists (Gardawski 2009b; Wenzel 2007). Solidarity is generally stronger among blue-collar workers; it also has more members than OPZZ among those with a basic vocational education. The new confederation, FZZ, resembles OPZZ in terms of its membership base. It is best represented among professionals and low-ranking managers employed in health care and administration.

The population of union members in Poland in 2007 was dominated by low-ranking specialists and managers (28 per cent) and professionals with university degrees, such as teachers and engineers (22 per cent) (Gardawski 2009b). Only about 20 per cent of union members were skilled blue-collar workers and foremen, and even fewer (11 per cent) were unskilled workers. Present-day Polish trade unions cannot be categorised merely as a bastion of the traditional working class. The most unionised sector in Poland is education, in which trade unions exist in more than 90 per cent of workplaces. Unsurprisingly, the second place is occupied by mining (75 per cent of workplaces unionised). The least unionised sectors are commerce and retail, financial services, hotels and construction, as well as small craft companies, in which trade unions exist in fewer than 15 per cent of firms. In some parts of the Polish economy,

¹² Discovering the specific reasons for pensioners' withdrawal would require another empirical study; trade unions' lack of financial resources and thus their shrinking services for pensioners have certainly played a part.

in particular, services, trade unions are either not present or they are so weak that 20–30 per cent of employees are not even sure whether unions exist or not in their companies (Gardawski 2009b: 553).

At the beginning of the new millennium, the dramatic loss of members and very weak unionisation in the private sector convinced the majority of Polish trade unions that increasing membership should become one of their core priorities¹³. By the end of the 1990s, Solidarity, supported by American unionists from the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (ALF-CIO) and the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) established the Dział Rozwoju Związku (DRZ, Union Development Office), while OPZZ founded Konfederacja Pracy (KP, Confederation of Labour), with the explicit aim of organising non-unionised workers (Gardawski 2001; Mrozowicki et al. 2010). Both initiatives initially encountered strong internal opposition. Konfederacja Pracy was even forced to accept the status of one of 79 union federations within OPZZ instead of being recognised as an internal inter-branch structure of the confederation (as in the case of DRZ in Solidarity). Even though the first outcomes of the new trade union strategies are already visible, their implementation is complex and demanding, not only because employers have to agree, but also because of the attitudes of employees, who frequently prove difficult to get on board (Czarzasty 2010; Ostrowski 2009).

Conclusion

Polish trade unions have long been the largest voluntary interest associations in the country. Their positive role in Poland's democratic changes is indisputable. In the 1990s, the unions committed themselves to bloodless political transformation and to secure trade union influence over economic restructuring. In the 2000s, their support for economic and industrial democracy was further confirmed by their promotion of social dialogue. However, the major Polish trade unions – Solidarity and OPZZ – have paid a high price for their involvement in party politics (particularly Solidarity). The post-1989 transformation awoke the 'old spectres' of the Polish labour movement, including its fragmentation, limited sectoral integration, trade union

¹³ Low membership was especially visible in 'genuine' private enterprises, unlike privatised former state-owned companies, where unions managed to maintain a more solid presence.

rivalry. Similarly they have paid a high price for their inability to deal with the diverse interests and life strategies of the various sections of the Polish working class. Trade unions are overrepresented in traditional economic sectors and in the public sector and underrepresented in the private service sector. Substantial sections of the labour force remain employed in very small companies and in employment relations (fixed-term and specific-task contracts) that make trade union access very difficult.

In order to affect new groups of workers and to revive workers' trust in trade unions, the latter have to secure their role in economic policy-and law-making. However, it should be emphasised that trade unions have been lacking a clear political visions of their roles in co-shaping labour market and industrial policies in the new Poland. They were not able to develop a good economic programme. This issue is connected, *inter alia*, with the deficit of trade union experts. Even though some good trade union specialist emerged thanks to the transfer of funds for the research on social dialogue, there are no research institutes and think tanks working for trade unions except for some sector-related institutions, such as Higher Teacher Education School of the Polish Theacher's Union in Warsaw (Wyższa Szkoła Pedagogiczna ZNP). There were attempts to create a trade union university by OPZZ and a trade union institute by Solidarity in the past. However, these projects were not accomplished.

Recent instances of interunion cooperation between FZZ, OPZZ and Solidarity, trade union organising campaigns and increasing links between the Polish trade unions and the European labour movement are just a few examples indicating that the trade unions are not prisoners of the past. Nevertheless, Polish trade unions face many challenges which they must address if they are to represent employees effectively. In order to survive, they need to reverse or at least halt membership decline. Despite some successes in the retail sector, the data collected for the purpose of this study shows that the investments made in trade union organising in multinational companies, undertaken by, among others, Solidarity, might be insufficient to attain this goal. They can do so only by retaining and expanding their capacity to collectively mobilise workers, by overcoming the historical legacy of fragmentation and by reinventing themselves as political, civil society and economic actors all at the same time (Hyman, 2001). In this respect, it remains to be seen to what extent the most recent instances of interunion cooperation – during the economic crisis – are harbingers of a new 'posttransitional' era of Polish unionism.

References

- Coldrick, A.P. and Jones P. (1979), 'Poland', in: A.P. Coldrick and P. Jones (eds.), *The international directory of the trade union movement*, London: Macmillan: 951–960.
- Crowley, S., and Ost D. (2001), 'Conclusion. Making sense of labor weakness in postcommunism', in: S. Crowley and D. Ost (eds.), *Workers after workers' states. Labor and politics in Postcommunist Eastern Europe*, Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield: 219–233.
- Czarzasty, J. (2006), *Capacity building for social dialogue in Poland*, European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions. Available at: <http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/pubdocs/2006/518/en/1/ef06518en.pdf> (accessed May 8, 2010).
- Czarzasty, J. (2010), *Stosunki pracy w handlu wielkopowierzchniowym w Polsce [Labour relations in retail chains in Poland]*, Warszawa: Oficyna Wydawnicza SGH.
- Czarzasty, J. (2011), 'Eventful year for major trade unions', *European Industrial Relations Observatory Online*, 17 February. Available at: <http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/eiro/2011/01/articles/pl1101019i.htm> (accessed October 20, 2011).
- Czarzasty, J. and Towalski R. (2008), 'Poland: industrial relations development in Europe 2007', *European Industrial Relations Observatory Online*, 30 September. Available at: <http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/eiro/studies/tn0803029s/pl0803029q.htm> (accessed 8 May 2010).
- Czarzasty, J., Gajewska, K. Mrozowicki, A. (2012), 'Institutions and strategies: trends and obstacles to recruiting workers into trade unions in Poland', *British Journal of Industrial Relations*, published online before printing on October 8, 2012, available at: <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1467-8543.2012.00919.x/abstract>.
- Gąciarz, B. (1999), 'Dynamika zbiorowych stosunków pracy w wybranych działach przemysłu i sekcjach usług publicznych' ['Dynamics of collective labour relations in selected branches of industry and sections of public services'], in: J. Gardawski, B. Gąciarz, J. Mokrzyzewski and W. Panków (eds.), *Rozpad bastionu? Związki zawodowe w gospodarce prywatyzowanej [The collapse of a bastion? Trade unions in a privatised economy]*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo ISP PAN.
- Gardawski, J. (2001), *Związki zawodowe na rozdrożu [Trade unions at the crossroads]*, Warszawa: Instytut Spraw Publicznych.
- Gardawski, J. (2002), 'New nationwide trade union centre established', *European Industrial Relations Observatory Online*. 19 February. Available at: <http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/eiro/2002/12/feature/pl0212109f.htm> (accessed on May 8, 2010).
- Gardawski, J. (2003), *Konfliktowy pluralizm polskich związków zawodowych [Competitive pluralism of Polish trade unions]*, Warszawa: Friedrich Ebert Foundation.

- Gardawski, J. (2009a), 'Ewolucja polskich związków zawodowych' [Evolution of Polish trade unions], in: J. Gardawski (ed.), *Polacy pracujący a kryzys fordyzmu* [Working Poles and the crisis of Fordism], Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar: 459–532.
- Gardawski, J. (2009b), 'Związki zawodowe w badaniach z 2007 roku' [Trade unions in research in 2007], in: J. Gardawski (ed.), *Polacy pracujący a kryzys fordyzmu* [Working Poles and the crisis of Fordism], Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar: 551–571.
- Gardawski, J., Gąciarz, B., Mokrzyzewski, J. and Panków, W. (1999), *Rozpad bastionu? Związki zawodowe w gospodarce prywatyzowanej* [The collapse of a bastion? Trade unions in a privatised economy], Warszawa: Wydawnictwo ISP PAN.
- GUS (2005), *Praca nierejestrowana w Polsce w 2004 r.* [Unregistered work in Poland in 2004], Warszawa: Główny Urząd Statystyczny.
- GUS (2009), *Mały rocznik statystyczny* [Concise statistical yearbook of Poland], Warszawa: Główny Urząd Statystyczny.
- Hardy, J. (2009), *Poland's new capitalism*, London: Pluto Press.
- Hyman, R. (2001), *Understanding European trade unionism. Between market, class and society*, London: Sage.
- Iankova, E.A. (2002), *Eastern European capitalism in the making*, New York: Cambridge.
- Keenoy, T. (1986), 'Solidarity: the anti-trade union', in: A. Pravda and B.A. Ruble (eds.), *Trade unions in communist states*, Boston: Allen & Unwin: 149–172.
- Kozek, W. (2003), 'Czy wyłania się model? Problem instytucjonalizacji zbiorowego przetargu w stosunkach pracy' [Is there any model emerging? The problem of collective bargaining institutionalisation in labour relations], in: W. Kozek (ed.), *Instytucjonalizacja stosunków pracy w Polsce* [Institutionalisation of labour relations in Poland], Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar: 16–40.
- Kozek, W. (2003), 'Styl przywództwa związkowego w Polsce' [Trade unions mode of leadership in Poland], in: J. Gardawski, J. Polakowska-Kujawa (eds.), *Globalizacja. Gospodarka. Praca. Kultura. W 70. rocznicę urodzin Prof. zw. dr hab. Leszka Gilejko* [Globalisation. Economy. Culture. Politics. In honour of Professor Leszek Gilejko on his 70th birthday], Warszawa: Oficyna Wydawnicza SGH: 383–397.
- Kozek, W. (2011), *Gra o jutro usług publicznych w Polsce* [The game for the future of public services in Poland], Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego.
- Kucharski, D. (2009), *Warunki życia społeczeństwa polskiego. Analiza z uwzględnieniem przynależności do związków zawodowych* [Living conditions of Polish society. Analysis with an emphasis on trade union membership], Łódź: Ośrodek Prac Społeczno-Zawodowych NSZZ 'Solidarność'.
- Kurczewski, J. (2006), 'The social functions of Solidarity', *Polish Sociological Review* 153(1): 111–127.

- Meardi, G. (2007), 'More voice after more exit? Unstable industrial relations in Central and Eastern Europe', *Industrial Relations Journal* 38(6): 503–523.
- Morawski, W. (1995), 'Korporatyzm: wyłanianie się nowych stosunków pracy w Polsce' [Corporatism: the emergence of new labour relations in Poland], in: T. Kowalik (ed.), *Negocjacje. Droga do paktu społecznego* [Negotiations. The way to the social pact], Warszawa: Instytut Pracy i Spraw Socjalnych.
- Morawski, W. (1997), 'Stosunki pracy w Polsce a wzory zewnętrzne' [Labour relations in Poland and external models], in: W. Kozek (ed.), *Zbiorowe stosunki pracy w Polsce w perspektywie integracji europejskiej* [Collective labour relations in Poland from the perspective of European integration], Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe 'Scholar'.
- Mrozowicki, A., Pulignano, V. and Van Hootehem, G. (2010), 'Worker agency and trade union renewal: the case of Poland', *Work, Employment and Society* 24 (2): 221–240.
- Mrozowicki, A., Trawinska, M. (2012), *Women's union activism and trade union revitalisation: the Polish experiences, Economic and Industrial Democracy*, Published online before print April 4, available at: <http://eid.sagepub.com/content/early/2012/04/04/0143831X12442578.abstract>
- Ost, D. (2005), *The defeat of Solidarity. Anger and politics in postcommunist Europe*, Ithaca & London: Cornell University Press.
- Ostrowski, P. (2009), *Powstawanie związków zawodowych w sektorze prywatnym w Polsce* [Development of trade unions in the private sector in Poland], Warszawa: C.H. Beck.
- Pollert, A. (1999), *Transformation at work in the new market economies of Central Eastern Europe*, London: Sage.
- Pravda, A. (1986), 'Poland in the 1970s: dual functioning trade unionism under pressure', in: A. Pravda and B.A. Ruble (eds.), *Trade unions in communist states*, Boston: Allen & Unwin: 125–147.
- Report on the Condition of Small and Medium-sized Enterprise Sector in Poland in the Years 2008–2009* (2010), Warszawa: PARP, available at: <http://en.parp.gov.pl/files/214/10216.pdf>
- Ruszkowski P. (1986), *Społeczne uwarunkowania dynamiki działań samorządu załogi* (manuscript), Warszawa.
- Sroka, J. (2000), *Europejskie stosunki przemysłowe w perspektywie porównawczej* [European industrial relations from a comparative perspective], Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego.
- Stenning, A. and Hardy J. (2005), 'Public sector reform and women's work in Poland: "Working for juice, coffee and cheap cosmetics!"', *Gender Work and Organization* 12: 503–526.
- Touraine, A., Dubet, F. Wiewiorka M. and Strzelecki J. (1983), *Solidarity: the analysis of a social movement: Poland 1980–1981*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Trzydzieści lat ustawy o samorządzie załogi przedsiębiorstwa państwowego. Materiały z konferencji [Thirty Years of the Act on Workers' Self-government in the State-owned Enterprise] (2012), Warszawa: Kancelaria Senatu.
- Upham, M. (1992), *Trade unions of the world 1992–93*, 3rd edition, London: Gale Group.
- Wenzel, M. (1998), 'Solidarity and Akcja Wyborcza 'Solidarność'. An attempt at reviving the legend', *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 31(2): 139–156.
- Wenzel, M. (2007), 'Związki zawodowe: Przynależność i ocena działalności' [Trade unions: membership and evaluation of activities], *Report BS/187/2007*, Warszawa: CBOS – Public Opinion Research Centre. Available at: [http://www.cbos.pl/ SPISKOM.POL/2007/K_187_07.PDF](http://www.cbos.pl/SPISKOM.POL/2007/K_187_07.PDF) [accessed on 8 May 2010].
- Wenzel, M. (2009), 'Związki zawodowe w badaniach CBOS 1980–2008' [Trade unions in the research of CBOS 1980–2008], in: J. Gardawski (ed.), *Polacy pracujący a kryzys fordyzmu* [Working Poles and the crisis of Fordism], Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar: 533–550.