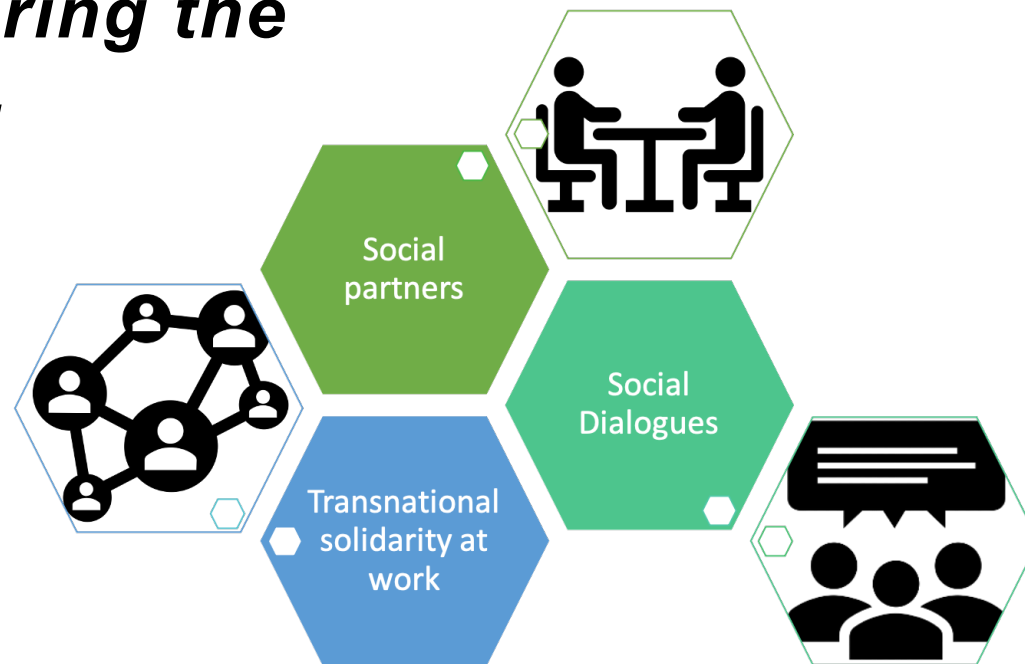


Transnational crisis corporatism: *The European sectoral social dialogue as an arena of transnational collective action during the Covid-19 pandemic.*

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Introduction: Defining the context

- Covid-19 pandemic has affected (transnational) working relations
- Put the idea of solidarity at the centre of attention
- Organized & corporatist interaction of collective actors as an act of solidarity
- Crisis corporatism as an organized reaction to tackle the pandemic situation
- At the European level: transnational solidarity at the level of the European sectoral social dialogue
- RQ: *How and why has transnational crisis corporatism at the level of the European sectoral social dialogue taken place?*

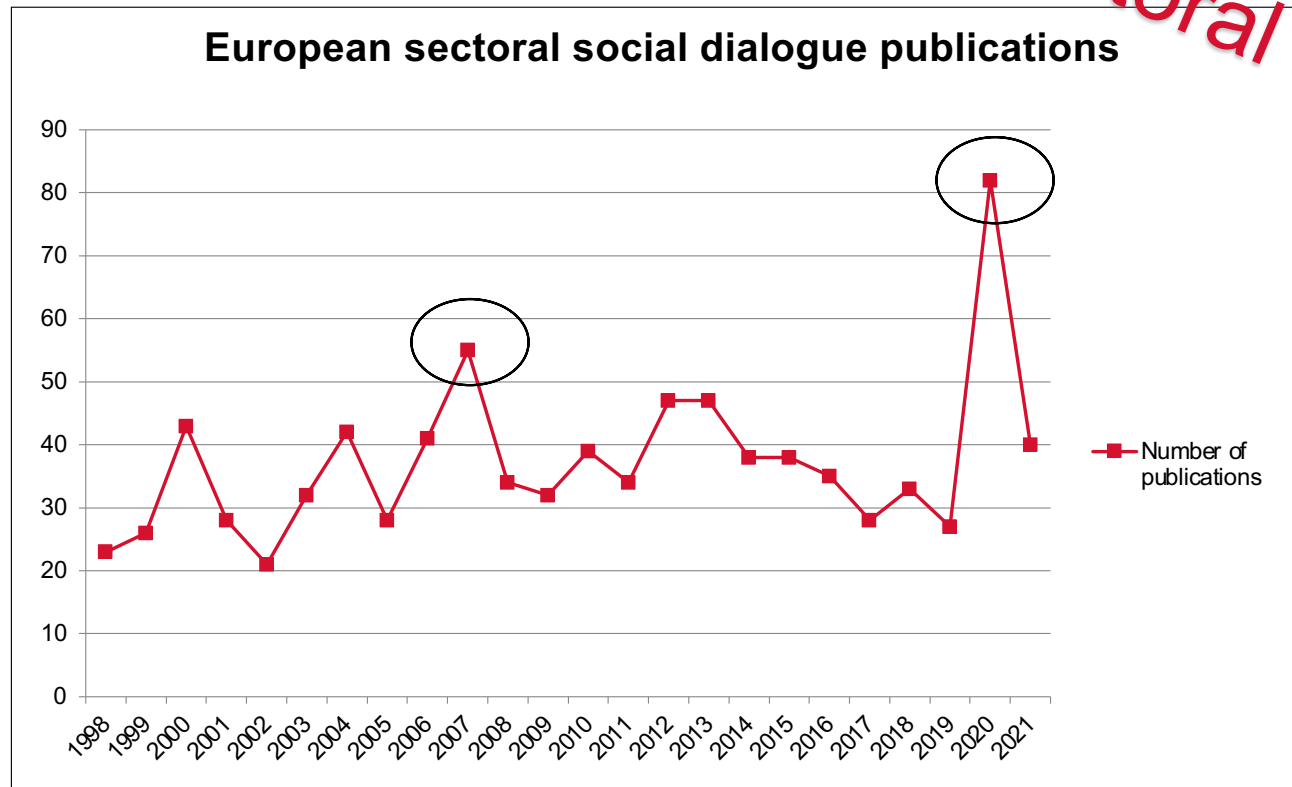
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EU sectoral social dialogue: Commission continues consultation with European social partners

To finish off the year with points to ponder, European social partners discussed how to modernise the organisation of the EU sectoral social dialogue at the Commission's third technical seminar.



(Re)Naissance of the
sectoral social dialogue?



Collective action in times of crisis

→ Corporatism

- „a distinctive mode for organizing the conflicting functional interests“ (Schmitter 1982: 262)
- Organized and coordinated interaction of interests (or interest groups) which often do have conflicting perspectives on how to tackle a specific situation or policy issue
- Bi/tripartite interaction of labor, the market and the government

→ Crisis corporatism

- More than modes & processes of negotiation and coordination
- „acute emergency coalitions“ (Urban 2012: 230)
- „processes of social concertation initiated in response to crisis conjunctures“ (Meardi & Tassinari 2022: 3)



Crisis corporatism @ the transnational level

→ **Stabilization mechanism**
(e.g. Engler 2016)

- Organizational structure & membership of national interest groups within EU umbrella organizations

→ **Bridging & bonding**
(Morgan & Pulignano 2020)

- Need of belongingness & a common identity
- Use of the power of rituals, symbols & rhetorical appeals in order to create a shared identity

→ **Crisis corporatism**
(Urban 2012; Tassinari & Meardi 2022)

- „acute emergency coalitions“
- Collective action in response to crisis

→ **Transnational crisis corporatism**

- Social partnership on the European level where organized and centralized umbrella interest groups (the European federations of trade unions and employer associations) get together with an EU institution and organize a (continuous) coordination of conflicting interests

En route to the sectoral committee:

The case of the social services sector

- Social services: Residential care activities & Social work activities without accommodation
- Sector characteristics:
 - Around 9 million employees, female share of 82 % of the sectoral employees
 - Insufficient funding, additional costs caused by the pandemic
 - Lack of qualified personnel, personnel leaving for other sectors where working conditions and/or pay were deemed more attractive
- Social dialogue between EPSU and the Social Employers on residential care work and social work
- Social dialogue between EFFE, EFSI, EFFAT, and UNI Europa on personal and household services

Social services: Two social dialogues in parallel

Commonalities

- Bipartite interaction
- Informal and semi-formal exchange
- Project-related collaboration
- Content-related interaction
- Published statements
 - Pandemic as a health risk
 - Raising awareness for the exposure of employees in the sector
 - Demanding protection & recognition

Differences

- Sectoral focus
 - Residential care work & social work vs. Personal and household services
- Size of network
 - Dialogue vs. quartet
- Overall aim of the social dialogue
 - Official recognition as social dialogue vs. Semi-formal & project-related collective action

Occasional interactions relying on a long tradition:

The case of the commerce sector

→ Commerce: Wholesale and retail trade

→ Sector characteristics:

- Around 33 million employees (2015)
- Labour-intensive work which relies on low skilled and often part-time work
- Very heterogeneous sector, from Amazon to the small retail trader
- Affected by internationalization, deregulation and technical innovation (e-commerce)

→ Social dialogue between UNI Europa, EuroCommerce and the EU Commission

 UNI global
union
europa



Commerce during the outbreak of the pandemic

- Tripartite collective action
- Traditionally established formal and informal structures
- Common work basis through rules of procedure, two year work programs & regular exchange
- Published statements
- Pandemic as a dual risk for employees in the sector (health vs. unemployment)
- Raising awareness for exposure of employees in the sector
- Demanding protection & recognition
- Demanding financial support and (re)training opportunities for employees

Transnational crisis corporatism

Sector	Social Services	Commerce
Corporatism	Bipartite	Tripartite
Mode of exchange	Semi-formal & informal exchange, Parallel structures by different network-related actors	Formal & Informal exchange, Historically evolved interaction structures, Constant network of actors
Mode of identity building	Project-based collaboration, content-related interaction	Common work program, regular meetings, rules of procedure
Crisis reaction/output	Rhetorical appeals, rituals, intensified institutionalization	Rhetorical appeals, rituals



Conclusions

- **Transnational crisis corporatism needs (internal & external) stabilizing structures and a strong common understanding**
 - Interest representation through (semi)institutionalized context of consultation & negotiation
 - External stabilization through EU Commission
 - Internal stabilization by rules of procedure, work program and common goals (project/content-related)

- **Bridging & bonding through regular, intensified interaction**
 - Common rhetorical appeals through joint statements
 - Content-related interaction & coalition building
 - Intensification of institutional structures

- **Remaining question: Is collective action always an act of solidarity?**

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MORE ABOUT THE PROJECT:

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