

Workplace democracy, solidarity and rights: challenges in contemporary Bulgaria

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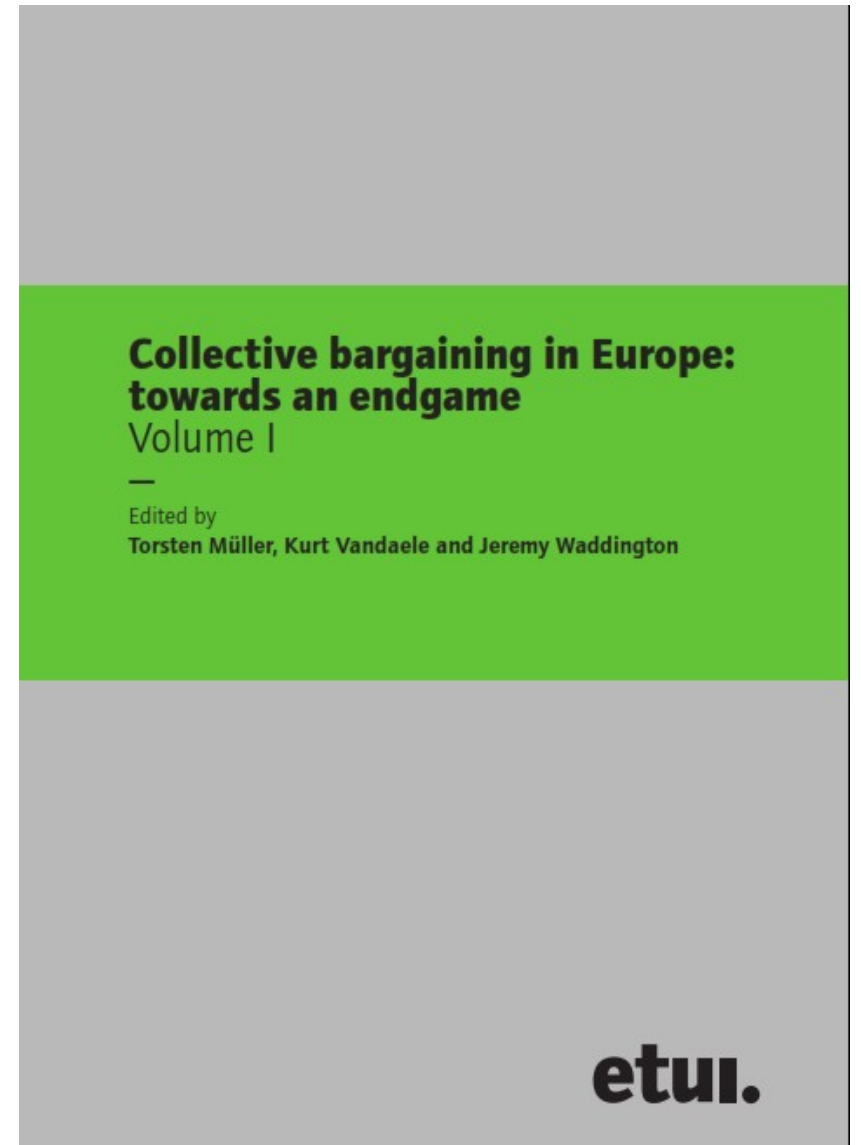
EZA Meeting: “Trade union policies for sustainable employment, decent work and overcoming increasing job insecurity”

30 October 2020 Sofia, Bulgaria



Objective

- To discuss workplace democracy in and trade union solidarity in Bulgaria in the context of large societal challenges



1. Challenges for the trade union practice globally...

- Globalization and the reorganization of production and services within and across borders
- Changing professional and social identities,
- Weakening links with political parties and their projects...
- Union renewal or revitalization? Is it possible and how?

2. The continuous erosion of typical employment and the question for the rights

- From typical to atypical employment: a new normality?
- How rights are defined, implemented for the different categories?
- How to build a solidarity among the core and the periphery? (Hyman)

	Numerical	Functional
Internal	Part-time work, flexitime arrangements, annualised working hours, working time accounts	Multitasking, job enrichment, multiskilling, teamworking, project organisation
External	Fixed-term contracts, freelance work, temporary agency work, temporary layoffs/seasonal work, irregular work	Subcontracting, outsourcing, freelance work

Sources: Atkinson & Meager, 1986; Goudswaard & De Nanteuil, 2000; Monastiriotis, 2003; Wickham, 2005; Huws, 2006

3. Solidarity and the (problematic) collective action?

- Why collective action is (still) problematic in Bulgaria and the post-socialist countries?
- Solidarity is essential for the provision of collective goods.
- But solidarity with whom?
 - Workplace
 - Company
 - Sector
 - Country
 - International...
- Is solidarity 'expensive'?

4. Solidarity as a trade union resource (Lévesque and Murray 2010)

- Internal solidarity at the very heart of union action

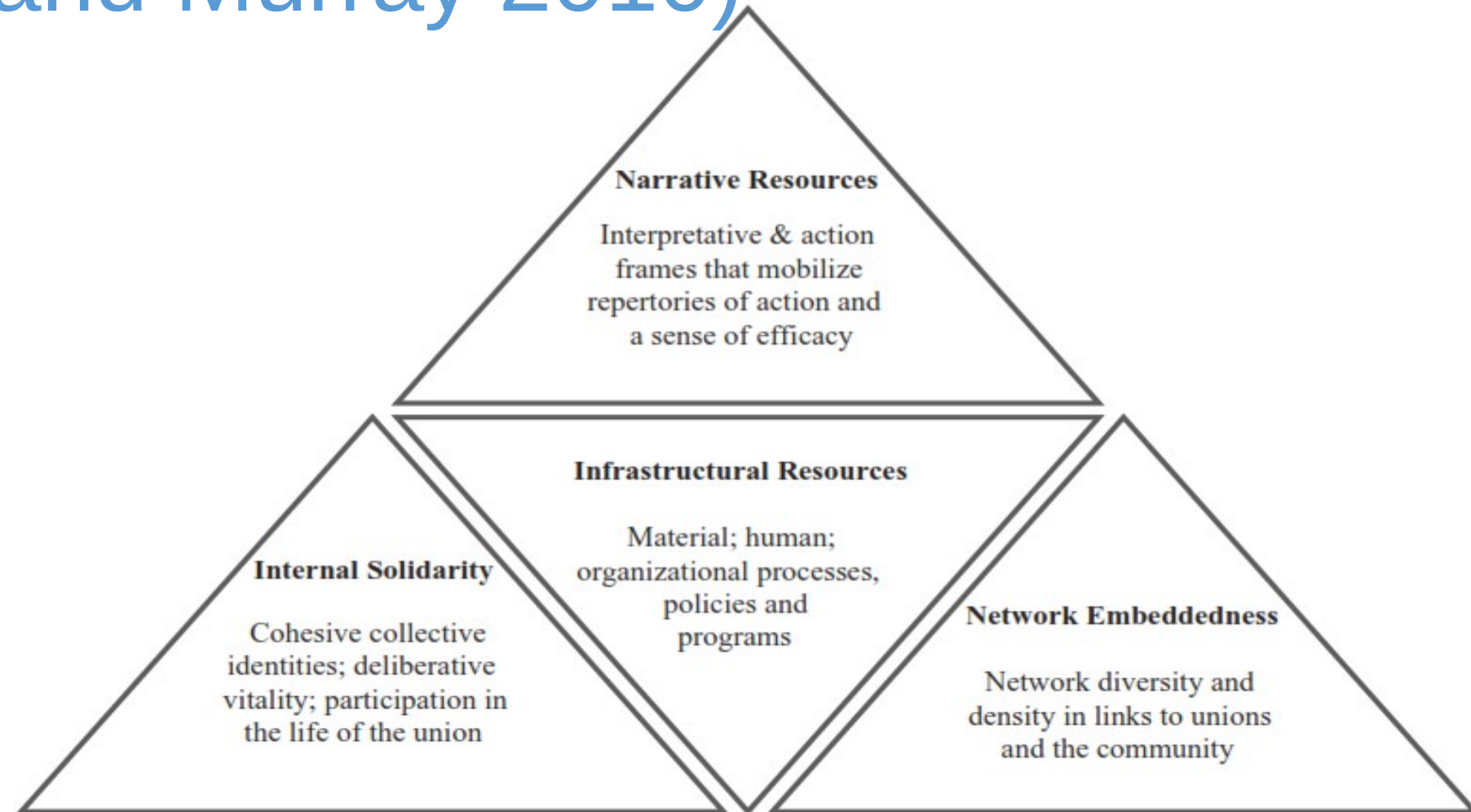


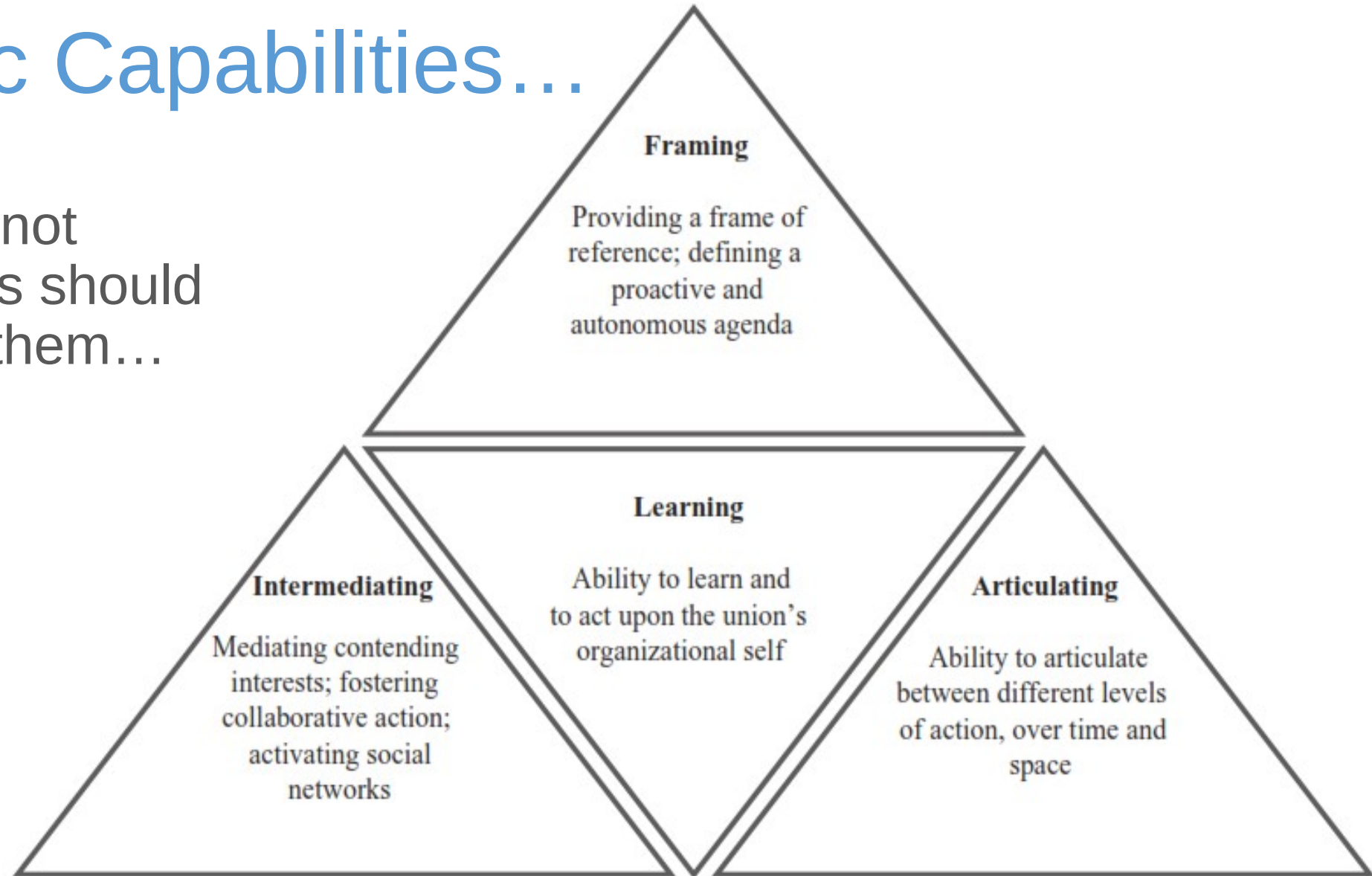
Figure 1 Union resources
Sofia - 30 October 2020

6. Workplace democracy in Bulgaria – the missing element

- The application of democratic principles, such as voting, referenda and public debate, to the workplace (direct/indirect).
- Any path-dependency? (MEBO, 1986 Labour Code)
- The left-overs from previous legal constructs – the General assembly and so on....
- The work councils and the implementation of the directives – should be triggered and stays rare...
- The empty shells (working conditions committees/groups)
- Missing board representation...
- The experiments...

5. Strategic Capabilities...

- Resources are not sufficient, actors should be able to use them...

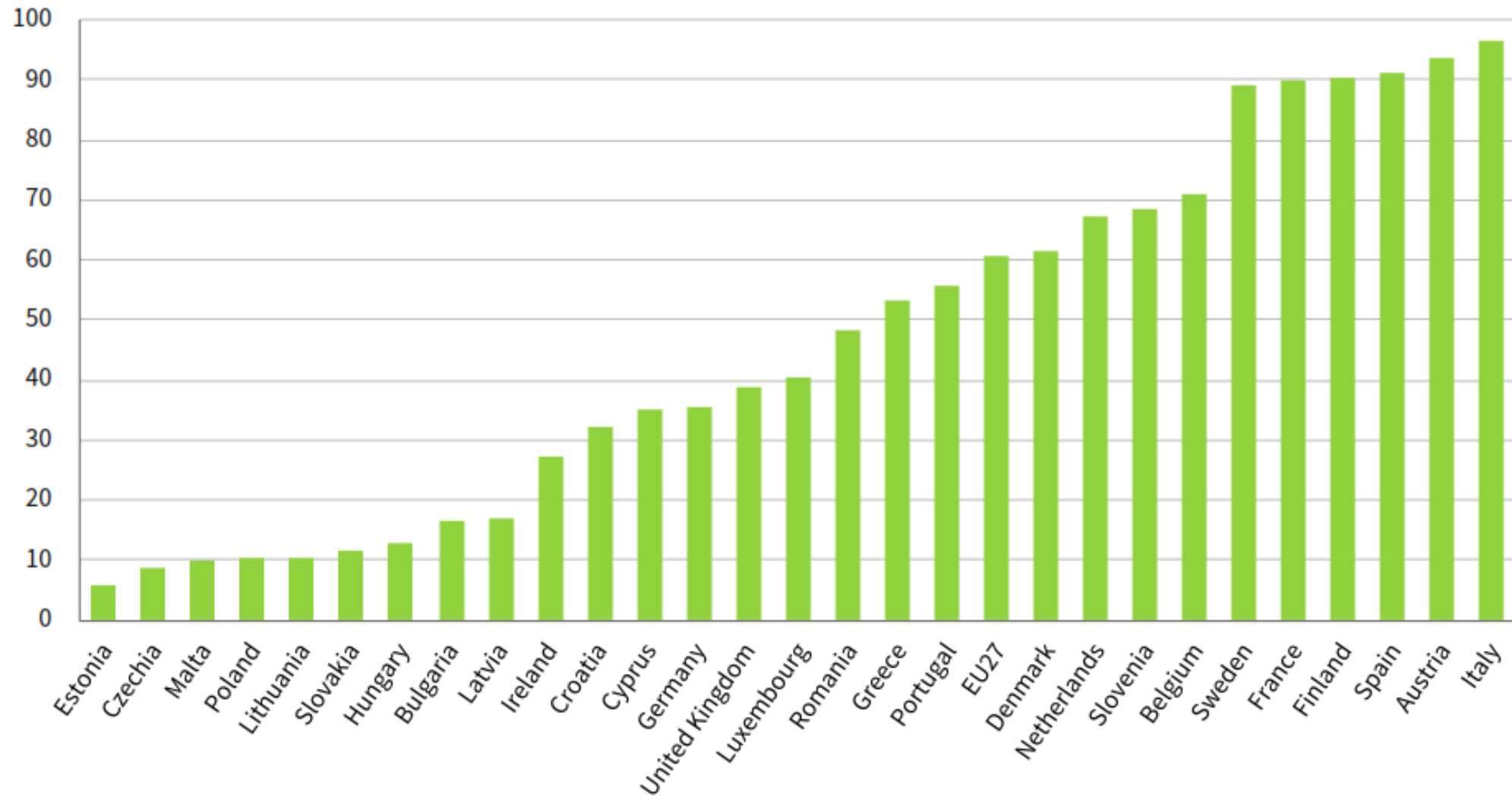


7. ECS Key findings

- The ECS 2019 demonstrates that companies can design their workplace practices to help generate outcomes that benefit both workers and employers.
- Businesses can boost performance while improving aspects of workers' job quality by bundling practices that increase employee autonomy, facilitate employee voice and promote training and learning



Figure 75: Establishments where the wages of any employees were set by collective bargaining, by country (%)



Source: ECS 2019 management questionnaire

8. ECS Key findings - 2

- The most successful firms not only have facilitating practices in place, they also have a supportive management;
- Businesses with strong workplace social dialogue score better on performance and well-being. Workplaces with involving, trusting and influential social dialogue are also more likely to have regular, direct employee participation that makes a difference on the ground.

Figure 72: Presence of official structures for employee representation, by country and establishment size (%)

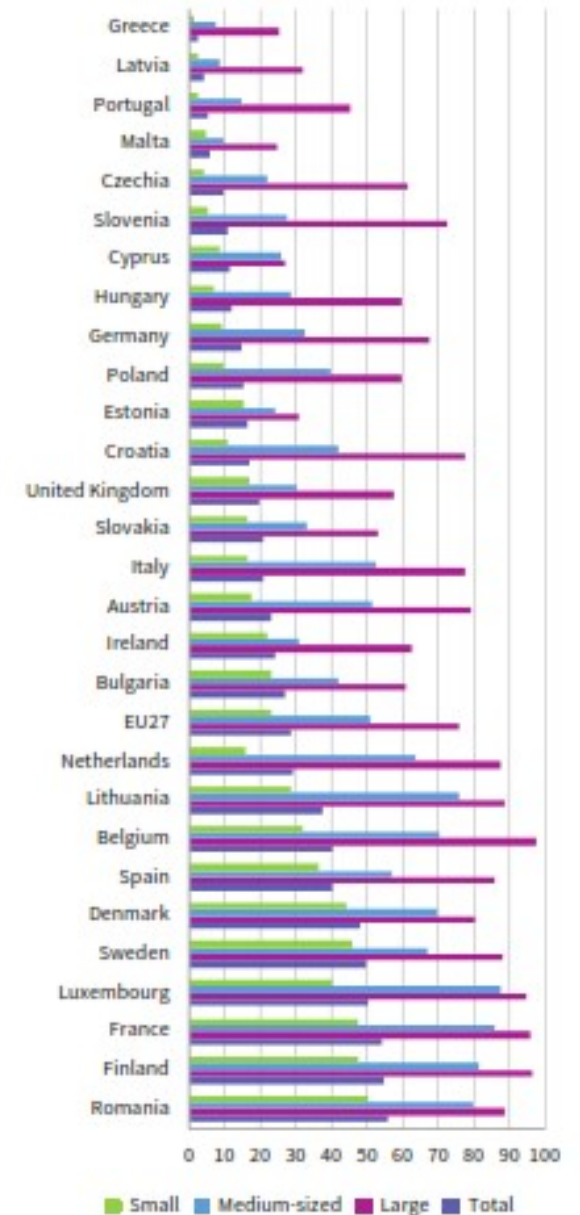
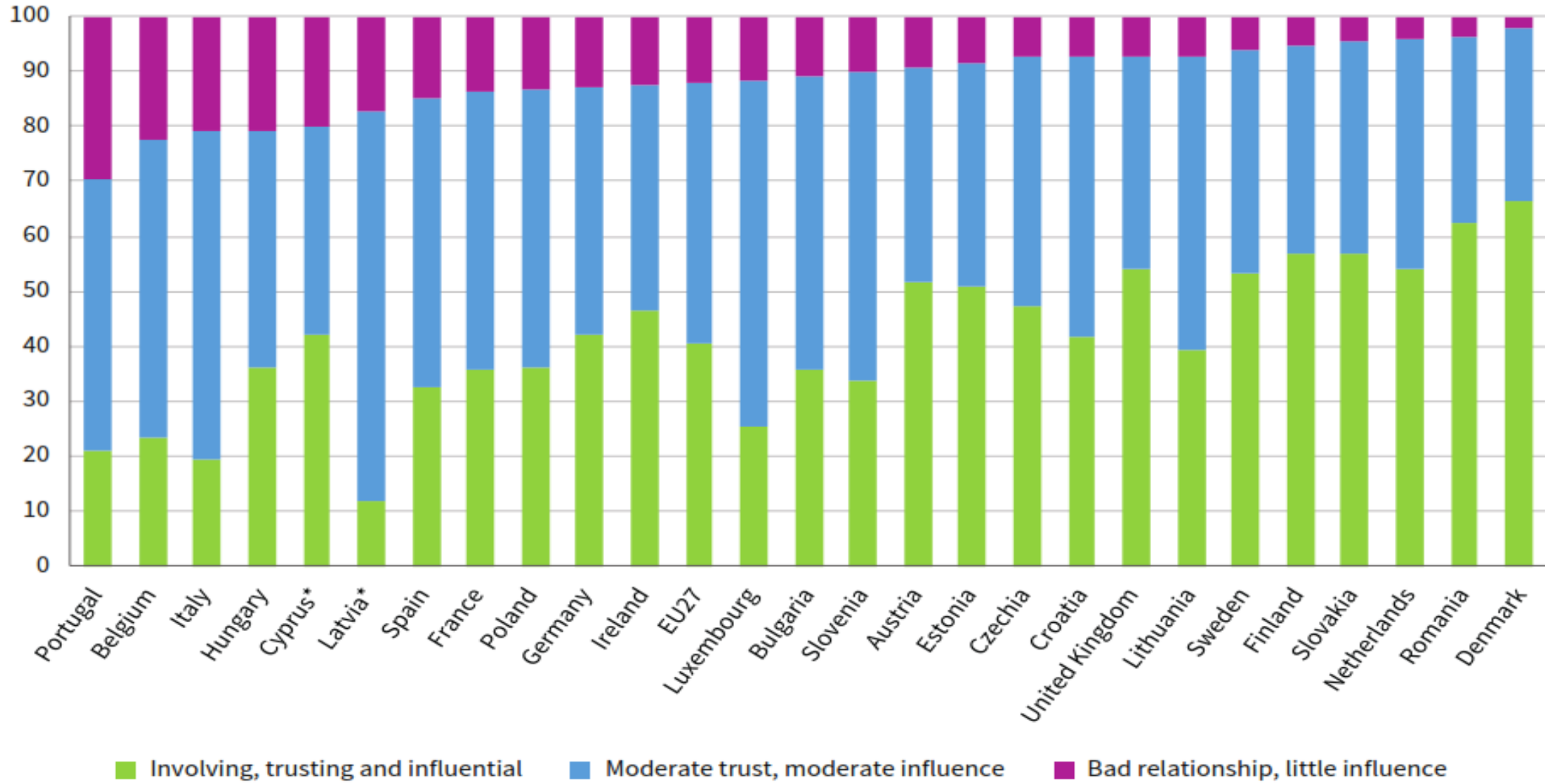


Figure 78: Establishment type – social dialogue, by country (%)



Some preliminary conclusions

- Rethinking solidarity...
- Promotion of direct and indirect workplace democracy...
 - Tools for employee participation (meetings, discussions, web-tools, newsletters)
 - What influence on managerial decisions?
 - Social dialogue
- Supporting workplace democracy through workplace innovation (a generic term used to describe innovations in enterprise structure, human resources management, the formulation of decision-making and innovation processes, the way relationships with clients or suppliers are organized, and the design of the work environment and internal support systems)

Thank you!