

## **Impact of the crisis on associative resources of trade unionism. The Spanish case study**

*Pere J. Beneyto*<sup>1</sup>

### **ABSTRACT**

There is great consensus in specialized research regarding the interaction of different power resources of the trade unions within the framework of labour relations, distinguishing between those of a *structural* (position in the labour market), *associative* (membership and representation) and *institutional* (participation in collective bargaining and social dialogue) nature. This article reviews the most relevant theoretical approaches and empirical evidence regarding these relations, making special reference to the impact of the crisis on the associative resources (structure and evolution of direct membership and the electoral audience) of Spanish trade unionism.

### **KEYWORDS**

crisis, labour market, trade unions, membership, representation

---

<sup>1</sup> Pere J. Beneyto Calatayud, PhD in Sociology and tenured professor in the Department of Social Sciences at the University of Valencia. Avda. Los Naranjos, 4b. 46021-Valencia (Spain).

## I ntroduction

Over eight years have passed since the onset of the global economic crisis, with its devastating effects on the labour market (unemployment, precariousness, segmentation), labour relations (legal deregulation, wage devaluation, weakening of collective bargaining) and on social cohesion (inequality, poverty, vulnerability) throughout the European Union and, particularly, in the southern part of the continent, impacting institutions and processes of government and representation.<sup>2</sup> The objective of this article is to analyse the impact of this process of change, particularly during the most recent crisis period, on Spanish trade unionism within the European context, using that which relates to the structure and evolution of its main associative resources (*member* presence and electoral *audience*) as reference indicators, in permanent and complex interaction with those of a structural (position in the labour market) and institutional (participation in collective bargaining and social dialogue)<sup>3</sup> nature. To do so, I initially conduct a specialized literature review on the factors of trade unionism, as well as on the empirical evidence derived from different surveys and comparative studies of Europe, in order to subsequently focus on the description and analysis of changes in the labour market and in labour relations, as well as the context of our study, regarding the associative resources (membership and representation) of Spanish trade unionism.

### 1. Indicators of unionism: theoretical approaches and comparative empirical studies

Of the institutions serving to drive representative democracy (political parties, civic associations, and business organizations) it is in the trade unions where membership plays a major role, in terms of power, resources, participation and legitimacy.<sup>4</sup> The corresponding relative share operates as a privileged

---

<sup>2</sup> EUROPEAN COMMISSION. *Industrial Relations in Europe 2014*. 2015; MOLINA, O. "Sindicalismo y crisis económica: amenazas, retos y oportunidades". *Kultur*. vol. I, n.2, 2014, pp. 171-194; BENNER, M. ed. *Before and beyond the global economic crisis*. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 2013.

<sup>3</sup> GUMBRELL-MCCORMIC, R. and HYMAN, R. *Trade Unions in Western Europe*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013.

<sup>4</sup> LEONARDI, S. "Rappresentanza, organizzazione e democrazia. Modelli e politichesindacali a confronto". *Democrazia e diritto*. n. 3-4, 2013, pp. 1-21.

indicator of the intervention capacity of the country's trade union movement<sup>5</sup>, strongly conditioned by structural characteristics and the labour relations model of the same.<sup>6</sup> This hinders comparisons, forcing the incorporation of other variables into the analysis (electoral audience, collective bargaining coverage, institutional participation).

An exploration of the main database on this subject matter (ICTWSS: *Data Base on Institutional Characteristics of Trade Unions, Wage Setting, State Intervention and Social Pacts*) allows us to take an initial look at two large phases in the evolution of trade unions in Europe: the overall growth between 1950 and 1980<sup>7</sup> and the sustained, though unequal, decline over the following three decades.<sup>8</sup> The economic crisis had a special impact since 2008<sup>9</sup> until reaching its current percentage of approximately 23% of the wage earning population of the European Union. This overall change in the trend has led to a heated academic and union debate regarding its causes and effects, resulting in numerous studies and investigations in the field, on both a national and comparative level. The resulting literature is broad and diverse, with three major areas of approach or perspectives, guided at analysing the factors conditioning current trade union membership, strategies for revitalization and member trajectories.

The first of these research lines focuses on studying the determinants of membership, distinguishing between macro (temporary, structural and institutional factors) and micro (sociodemographic and cultural) levels. As for the macro factors, studies have attempted to evaluate how union membership is influenced by the evolution of the economic cycle<sup>10</sup>, changes in occupational structure from the industrial to the tertiary paradigm<sup>11</sup>, the

---

<sup>5</sup> EBBEINGHAUS, B. and VISSER, J. "When Institutions Matter. Union Growth and Decline in Western Europe, 1950-1995". *European Sociological Review*. Vol. 15, n.2, 1999, pp. 135-158.

<sup>6</sup> SULLIVAN, R. "Labour market or labour movement? The union density bias as barrier to labour renewal". *Work, employment and society*. Vol. 24, n.1, 2010, pp. 145-156.

<sup>7</sup> EBBEINGHAUS, B. and VISSER, J. *Trade Unions in Western Europe since 1945*. London: MacMillan, 2000.

<sup>8</sup> SCHMITT, J. and MITUKIEWICZ, A. *Politics Matters. Changes in unionization rates in rich countries, 1960-2010*. Washington: Center for Economic and Policy Research, 2011; SCHNABEL, C. "Union membership and density: Some (not so) stylized facts and challenges". *European Journal of Industrial Relations*. Vol. 19, n.3, 2013, pp. 255-272.

<sup>9</sup> EUROPEAN COMMISSION, 2015.

<sup>10</sup> BAIN, G. and ELSHEIKH, F. *Union Growth and the Business Cycle: An Econometric Analysis*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1976; CHECCHI, D. and VISSER, J. "Pattern persistence in European trade union density: A longitudinal analysis 1950-1996". *European Sociological Review*. Vol. 21, 2005, pp. 1-21.

<sup>11</sup> EBBEINGHAUS, B. and VISSER, J. *Trade Unions in Western Europe since 1945*. London: MacMillan, 2000; BRYSON, A., EBBEINGHAUS, B. and VISSER, J. "Causes, *Workers of the World*, Volume I, Number 9, May 2018, p. 113-137

distribution of employment based on work centre size and the public or private nature of the same<sup>12</sup> and, at an institutional level, changes in collective bargaining coverage and structure<sup>13</sup> and the validity of the *Ghent system* of trade union participation in the provision of welfare benefits.<sup>14</sup>

From a micro perspective, studies have focused on the analysis of the weight of the sociodemographic (gender, age, education level, origin) as well as on variables related to particular employment (activity sector, contract type, years with the company, wage level) that affect the propensity to become a member of a trade union.<sup>15</sup> And, even those of a cultural nature that are related to ideological orientation<sup>16</sup> and individual or cooperative values<sup>17</sup> have been considered. As for motivations and incentives for membership, a specialized literature<sup>18</sup> distinguishes between those of an institutional (desire for protection and/or services), identity-based (similarity with the values and

---

consequences and cures of union decline". *European Journal of Industrial Relations*. Vol. 17, n.2, 2011, pp. 97-105.

<sup>12</sup> BAIN, G. *Industrial Relations in Britain*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1983; HARTLEY, J. and STEPHENSON, G. *Employment Relations*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1992.

<sup>13</sup> CLEGG, H. *El sindicalismo en un sistema de negociación colectiva*. Madrid: Ministerio de Trabajo, 1986.

<sup>14</sup> SCRUGGS, L. "The Ghent system and Union Membership in Europe, 1970-1996. *Political Research Quarterly*. Vol. 55, n.2, 2002, pp. 275-297.

<sup>15</sup> SCHNABEL, C. and WAGNER, J. "Union Density and determinants of union membership in 18 EU countries: evidence from micro data, 2002/03". *Industrial Relations Journal*. Vol. 38, n.1, 2007, pp. 5-32; FAZEKAS, Z. "Institutional effects on the presence of trade unions at the workplace: Moderation in a multilevel setting". *European Journal of Industrial Relations*. Vol. 17, n.2, 2011, pp. 153-169; EBBINGHAUS, B., GÖBEL, C. and KOOS, S. "Social capital and workplace contexts matter: Comparing union membership in Europe". *European Journal of Industrial Relations*. Vol. 17, n.22, 2011, pp. 107-124.

<sup>16</sup> RILEY, N. "Determinants of Union Membership: A Review". *Labour*. Vol. 11, n.2, 1997, pp. 265-301; HAGUE, R., HARROP, M. and BRESLIN, S. *Comparative Government and Politics*. London: MacMillan Press, 1998.

<sup>17</sup> VISSER, J. "Why Fewer Workers Join Unions in Europe: A Social Custom Explanation of Membership Trends". *British Journal of Industrial Relations*. Vol. 40, n.3, 2002, pp. 403-430.

<sup>18</sup> FREEMAN, R. and MEDOFF, J. *What Do Unions Do?* New York: Basic Books, 1984; KLANDERMANS, B. "Psychology and trade union participation: Joining, acting, quitting". *Journal of Occupational Psychology*. Vol. 59, 1986, pp. 189-204; CREGAN, C. "Can organizing work? An inductive analysis of individual attitudes toward union membership". *Industrial and Labor Relations Review*. Vol. 58, n.2, 2015, pp. 282-304; BLANCHFLOWER, D. "International patterns of union membership". *British Journal of Industrial Relations*. Vol. 45, n.1, 2007, pp. 1-28; CHECCHI, D., VISSER, J. and VAN DER WERFFHORST, H. "Inequality and Union membership: The influence of relative earnings and inequality attitudes", in *British Journal of Industrial Relations*. Vol. 48, n.1, 2010, pp. 84-108; TOUBOL, J. and JENSEN, C. "Why do people join trade unions? The impact of workplace union density on union recruitment". *Transfer*. Vol. 20, n.1, 2014, pp. 135-154.

proposals of the organization) and sociability (personal and group relations) nature.

Overall, the research on the determinants of trade union membership, of both a quantitative and a qualitative nature, has generated a great deal of empirical work which has validated some of the principal hypotheses. Of special significance are the multi-variable analyses conducted by different research teams on the *European Social Survey*<sup>19</sup>, which considers the net rate of trade union membership of the wage-earning population as the dependent variable (excluding the employed, retired, pensioners, freelancers, etc.) and studies its correlation with the principal dependent variables (sociodemographic, structural and institutional) of which it has data.

The reference studies have a high degree of agreement in their results, allowing us, for expository effects, to classify the studied variables in three large groups, according to their positive influence (greater or lesser) on membership tendencies:

- a) *strong impact*: economic cycle (trade union membership has a pro-cyclical behaviour, increasing with the growth in employment and wages and decreasing in recessions, although in both cases, with a certain temporary disparity), a direct correlation with company size, the existence of trade union structures in the work centre (delegates, business committees, union branches) and institutions of the Ghent system (existing only in Belgium and Scandinavian countries).
- b) *average impact*: activity sector (greater membership propensity in industry and public services and a lower propensity in private sectors), contractual situation (membership rate increases for permanent workers and decreases for temporary workers), age and education level (curvilinear relationship).
- c) *weak impact*: in terms of trade union membership, the gender gap presents an unequal distribution, however with a tendency to decrease and even to inverse in some countries (Denmark, Finland, Sweden, United Kingdom, being some of the most

---

<sup>19</sup> SANO, J. and WILLIAMSON, J. "Factors affecting Union decline in the 18 OECD countries and their implications for Labor Movement Reform". *International Journal of Comparative Sociology*. Vol. 49, n.6, 2008, pp. 479-500; SCHEUER, S. "Union membership variation in Europe: A ten-country comparative analysis". *European Journal of Industrial Relations*. Vol. 17, n.1, 2011, pp. 57-73; SCHMITT, J. and MITUKIEWICS, A. *Politics Matter. Changes in unionization rates in rich countries, 1960-2010*. Op.Cit; TURNER, T. and D'ART, D. "Public perceptions of trade unions in countries of the European Union: A causal analysis". *Labor Studies Journal*. Vol.37, n.1, 2012, pp. 33-55; SCHNABEL, C. "Union membership and density: Some (not so) stylized facts and challenges". Op.Cit.

significant), with worker nationality of origin also being of low significance. On the other hand, the collective bargaining model generates an unequal impact on membership based on whether its structure (centralization-decentralization) and type of coverage (universal-unionized) activates the *free-riding* mechanisms to a greater or lesser degree.

A multivariate analysis carried out on data from the European Social Survey<sup>20</sup> concluded that when the most favourable circumstances coincide (workers over the age of 30, with permanent contracts in medium to large sized companies of the industry or public service sectors, having a trade union presence in the work centre) the mean membership rate (23%) increased up to 61%, while in the opposite pole (young workers with temporary contracts in private service sectors and micro-companies without the presence of trade union structures) the rate virtually disappears, decreasing to between 1 and 3 per cent.

To summarize, the membership patterns that have been created over the past three years and that transversally affect all of the European countries, while having an unequal degree of development of the determinant factors analysed, and of the renewal strategies implemented by the respective trade union organizations, explain the differences existing between the main labour relation systems, both in their rates of unionism as well as in the recent evolution of the same.

From a diachronic perspective, the analysis of trade union membership in Europe since 1960, considering both absolute and relative values<sup>21</sup>, provides sufficient empirical evidence to dispute the recurrent neoliberal clichés regarding the structural crisis and the inevitable decline in unionism<sup>22</sup> caused by globalization, technological change and the (supposed) defensive concentration in the old strongholds of industry. The data available, however, accredits both the maintenance of major levels of unionism as well as the difficulties in its adaptation to the occupational and institutional changes occurring since 1980, leading to a reduction in membership rates that is apparently neither homogenous in terms of the different occupational variables studied, or generalizable to all countries of the European Union.

---

<sup>20</sup> VAN GYES, G. "The social partners as membership organisations: an overview of forms and trends in the Member States". *Industrial Relations in Europe 2006*. Luxembourg: Comisión Europea, 2006, pp. 19-40.

<sup>21</sup> SCHNABEL, C. "Union membership and density: Some (not so) stylized facts and challenges". Op.Cit.

<sup>22</sup> TROY, L. *The Twilight of the Old Unionism*. New York: M.W. Sharpe, 2004.

This diversity has been maintained, even over recent years in which the overall impact of the crisis has not significantly altered the membership rankings for the different countries and labour relations models.<sup>23</sup>

According to data from the ICTWSS, between 2000 and 2007 the net membership rate in trade unions in the 28 countries of the EU (*Table 1*) decreased by 2.9%, dropping from 26.9 to 23.9 per cent of the total wage earning population, although this was not a generalized trend. Increases were recorded in 9 countries and decreases of less than the mean were found in six other countries. During the recessive phase of the cycle, the decrease was more pronounced (-7.5%) although once again, this was not homogenous, with increases in membership occurring in Belgium, Italy and to a lesser extent, France and Malta, and very unequal variations in the other countries, with special importance being seen in the countries that were most affected by the crisis (Greece, Spain, Portugal and those of the Eastern area).

On the other hand, comparative studies have allowed us to verify that the membership density of each country or area (Scandinavia, Central Europe, Anglo Saxon, Mediterranean and Eastern) is greatly determined by the characteristics of the labour relation systems in which the trade unions operate<sup>24</sup>, with common and differentiated patterns existing in each of these.<sup>25</sup>

Having identified the different determinant factors of membership evolution and the power of union intervention, quantifying the uneven impact on the principal organizational and labour relation models, more recent debates and studies have focused on the design and implementation of corresponding strategies for revitalization, having different effects based on the specific case at hand, yet which highlight the resistance and renewal capacity of the unions during especially difficult times.<sup>26</sup>

### *Table 1*

#### **Trade union membership\* in Europe, 2000-2014**

---

<sup>23</sup> BRYSON, A., EBBINGHAUS, B. and VISSER, J. "Causes, consequences and cures of union decline". Op.Cit.; SCHMITT, J. and MITUKIEWICS, A. *Politics Matter. Changes in unionization rates in rich countries, 1960-2010*. Op.Cit.

<sup>24</sup> EBBINGHAUS, B. and VISSER, J. "When Institutions Matter. Union Growth and Decline in Western Europe, 1950-1995". Op.Cit.; TRAXLER, F. *National Labour Relations in Internationalized Markets*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011.

<sup>25</sup> BERNACIAK, M., GUMBELL-MCCORMIC, R. and HYMAN, R. *El sindicalismo europeo: ¿de la crisis a la renovación?* Madrid: Fundación 1º de Mayo, 2015; EUROPEAN COMMISSION, 2015.

<sup>26</sup> BERNACIAK, M., GUMBELL-MCCORMIC, R. and HYMAN, R. *El sindicalismo europeo: ¿de la crisis a la renovación?* Op.Cit.

Country	2000		2007		Var. in % 2000-07	2014		Var. in % 2007-14
	No.	Rate	No.	Rate		No.	Rate	
SCANDINAVIAN SYSTEM								
Denmark	1,824	73.9	1,733	70.7	-4.9	1,633	68.8	-5.7
Finland	1,504	75.0	1,529	70.5	+1.6	1,462	69.0	-4.4
Sweden	2,989	79.1	2,936	70.8	-1.7	2,878	67.3	-1.9
Total	6,317	76.9	6,198	70.6	-1.9	5,973	68.3	-3.6
GERMANIC SYSTEM								
Germany	7,928	24.6	6,604	19.9	-16.7	6,330	18.1	-4.1
Austria	1,190	36.6	1,029	29.9	-13.5	989	27.4	-3.8
Belgium	1,936	56.2	2,039	54.7	+5.3	2,120	55.1	+3.9
Holland	1,574	22.9	1,422	19.3	-9.6	1,265	17.8	-11.0
Luxembourg	116	42.8	120	38.3	+3.3	116	32.8	-2.7
Total	12,744	27.6	11,214	23.3	-12.0	10,821	21.4	-3.5
ANGLO-SAXON SYSTEM								
Cyprus	145	65.1	166	54.9	+14.4	136	45.2	-17.8
Ireland	495	38.0	562	31.5	+9.7	520	29.6	-7.5
Malta	76	60.3	75	56.4	-0.9	78	52.9	+3.7
United Kingdom	7,108	30.2	6,865	27.9	-1.9	6,445	25.8	-6.1
Total	7,824	30.9	7,668	28.1	-1.9	7,179	26.5	-6.4
MEDITERRANEAN SYSTEM								
Spain	2,037	16.6	2,879	17.4	+41.3	2,360	16.9	-18.1



France	1,781	8.0	1,795	7.5	-0.6	1,825	7.7	+1.7
Greece	631	26.5	710	24.5	+11.8	480	21.5	-32.4
Italy	5,195	34.8	5,665	33.5	+8.2	6,131	37.3	+8.2
Portugal	783	21.6	804	20.8	-2.4	665	18.9	-17.3
Total	10,427	18.8	11,596	18.1	+9.3	11,461	19.0	-1.2
EASTERN SYSTEM								
Bulgaria	550	23.0	490	17.2	-10.9	454	17.5	-7.3
Czech	1,080	27.2	736	18.3	-21.9	514	12.7	-30.2
Croatia	440	37.2	436	34.0	-0.9	352	30.9	-19.3
Slovakia	623	32.3	383	18.8	-35.3	261	13.3	-31.8
Slovenia	312	41.6	240	28.1	-27.3	160	21.2	-33.3
Estonia	77	14.5	44	7.4	-38.9	32	5.7	-27.3
Hungary	711	22.0	510	15.0	-22.0	360	10.5	-29.4
Latvia	175	20.2	156	16.6	-10.8	102	9.0	-34.6
Lithuania	184	16.8	115	9.3	37.5	103	9.0	-10.4
Poland	1,850	17.5	1,820	15.6	+14.8	1,540	12.5	-15.4
Romania	2,043	34.7	2,228	36.0	+9.1	1,233	19.8	-44.6
Total	8,045	24.8	7,158	20.4	-11.0	5,111	14.4	-28.6
TOTAL EU	45,177	26.9	43,834	23.9	-2.9	40,545	22.3	-7.5

Source: ICTWSS database.

\* Only membership of wage earning population

The paradigm of the revitalization of unionism arises, initially, from an academic train of thought (*Labour Revitalization Studies*) with Anglo Saxon

origins.<sup>27</sup> Yet it has been progressively adapted to other union models and defined as a set of strategies created to intervene in the different sources of trade union power (structural, associative, organizational, institutional, strategic and narrative) so as to identify the causes of the current union representation crisis and to attempt to revert their effects (loss of membership and influence) through the deployment, in each case, of the corresponding strategies of negotiation, recruitment, organizational restructuring, institutional participation, alliances and communication.<sup>28</sup>

Based on this multi-dimensional approach, European trade unions have adapted their respective organizational models and social environments to distinct strategies. They have attempted to identify the *soft factors* from the determinants of union power on which they may intervene (presence in work centres, creation of representation structures, coverage and content of collective bargaining, service provision, institutional participation, social pressure, legal regulation), in order to compensate for the impact of the structural *hard factors* (economic cycle, company size, activity sector, technological change, demographic variables) which are not often susceptible to modification due to their direct intervention<sup>29</sup>, whose recent evolution and current situation in the Spanish case shall be analysed below.

## 2. Returning to the social issue: changes in the labour market and in labour relations

After the first years of the financial crisis (the *great recession*), the most recent stage has been characterized by a coordinated effort between political and economic leaders to impose a radical transformation of the labour relations model (the *great aggression*), which has broken the fragile balance achieved during decades of social dialogue and which has profoundly aggravated the asymmetry between capital and work.<sup>30</sup> This has been accomplished through using labour deregulation to weaken the three

---

<sup>27</sup> BACCARO, L., HAMANN, K. and TURNER, L. "The politics of labour movement revitalization: The need for a revitalized perspective". *European Journal of Industrial Relations*. Vol. 9, 2003, pp. 119-133; PHELAN, C. *Trade Union Revitalisation. Trends and prospects in 34 countries*. Oxford: Peter Lang, 2007.

<sup>28</sup> FREGE, C. and KELLY, J. "Union revitalization strategies in comparative perspective", en *European Journal of Industrial Relations*. Vol. 9, n.1, 2003, pp. 7-24.

<sup>29</sup> SCHEUER, S. "Union membership variation in Europe: A ten-country comparative analysis". Op.Cit.; SCHNABEL, C. "Union membership and density: Some (not so) stylized facts and challenges". Op.Cit.

<sup>30</sup> LEHNDORFF, S. "Acting in different worlds. Challenges to transnational trade union cooperation in the Eurozone crisis". *Transfer*. Vol. 21, n.2, 2015, pp. 157-170.

collective devices that have historically acted in defence and protection of workers: legal protection, union intervention and business coverage, leading to a *great regression* in terms of labour vulnerability and social inequality. We are, therefore, returning to the social issue whose magnitude and drama (unemployment, precariousness, poverty and inequality) have contradicted the dominant discourse of inevitable austerity and insufficient resources, updating the debate on the centrality of work, both in its real (its search, exercising, conditions, regulation, etc.) and symbolic (identity factor and citizenship) dimensions and confirming the need to construct a new account of the causes and effects of the crisis, its actors and alternative strategies.

In the first case, the evolution of the economic cycle reveals that, even when the causes of the crisis do not lie in the labour market and its supposed rigidity, but rather, in financial speculation and its true voracity, these have been used as a pretext to change the social model and to promote an enormous transfer of income from work to capital, devaluing labour rights and conditions, cutting welfare provisions and privatizing public services. All these have had traumatic effects on both the labour market and labour relations and social cohesion. Updating the model applied in the 1980s by the governments of Thatcher and Reagan, one of the central lines of the conservative strategy in Spain has been to break with the representativeness, resources and legitimacy of class unionism, in order to debilitate, if not eliminate, its functions as a social actor and gender mainstreaming with intervention capacity. This obtains both in the processes of the first distribution of income (wages, working conditions) through collective bargaining, as well as in the very mechanisms of the second re-distribution (fiscal policy, state welfare benefits) through institutional participation and social pressure.

Now we shall assess the damage caused by the crisis and conservative management which, using the crisis as a pretext, attempted to radically change both the scenario (labour market segmentation, employment vulnerability), and the institutions (weakening collective bargaining, alienating social dialogue) and labour relations actors (de-legitimation of unionism, criminalization of social protest), in order to reinforce their political, economic and even cultural hegemony. Thus, in order to appropriately contextualize both the impact of the crisis and the labour counter-reform imposed in Spain by the conservative government of the *Partido Popular*, as well as the difficulties for union action, it is useful to analyse, even schematically, the recent evolution and current state of the principal socioeconomic and labour indicators.

In the first case, and according to the Labour Force Survey, at the end of 2015, the Spanish wage-earning population was 14,988,900, which is 12.3% less

than in 2007, with over two and a half million jobs having been destroyed. When considering the most significant sociodemographic variables, the structure and evolution of paid employment is characterised by:

- *gender*: increases in the participation of women, who have gone from representing 43.8 to 47.9 per cent.
- *age*: those under the age of 30 currently represent 14.4% of the total of all wage earners, being the age group that was most affected by the crisis, having lost some 2,236,800 jobs since 2007.
- *nationality*: one out of every ten wage earners is foreign-born, with this being one of the groups that was the most harshly affected by the crisis, losing some 35.3% of its earnings since 2007.
- *contract*: the rate of temporary contracts is 25.7%, ten percentage points above the European mean, having a mean duration of 53 days.
- *working day*: part time contracts have increased considerably during the crisis, from 11.7 to 16.9 per cent, with this being a very feminized contractual modality, having rates of 26.2 for women and 8.4% for men.
- *length of service*: 18.4% of the salaried workers have been working in their job for less than one year, 12.8% between one and two and the rest (79.8%) have over three years of length of service.
- *activity sector*: the largest group of wage earners are concentrated in the private (57.4%) and public (20.1%) services, while industry represents 14.6% of the total, with construction and agriculture having lower percentages (4.8 and 3.2 per cent, respectively).
- *company size*: 40.5% of those employed in the private sector (with the exception of agriculture and financial services) work in micro-companies (with less than 10 employees), a percentage that is much higher than the European mean (29.3%). 19.3% work in small companies (10 to 49), and medium (50 to 249) and large companies (over 250 employees) employing 13.5 and 26.7 per cent, respectively, of the wage earners.

On the other hand, unemployment, in its diverse dimensions (magnitude, evolution, composition and duration) represents the most dramatic expression of the crisis, currently estimating the number of unemployed individuals at 4,779,500, some 20.9% of the active population, with this rate having ranged from 8.5% in 2007 to 26.1% in 2013, outnumbering in all cases, the European mean. Unemployment rates for women are higher than those of men (22.5 and 19.5 per cent, respectively), although it is the age variable that has a less

equal distribution, reaching the highest levels in the cohorts of 16 to 19 years (66.1%), of 20 to 24 (42.5%) and of 25 to 29 (27.6%). With all of this, the most dramatic situation is associated with long term unemployment (43.6% with over two years) and with the loss of unemployment benefits, whose coverage rate has decreased by over twenty points since the start of the crisis, until reaching 55.2% at the end of 2015. The integrated analysis of this data, via the creation of synthetic indices, allows us to quantify the impact of the crisis on our labour market, both in its temporary evolution as well as comparative assessment with the main countries of our region.

The labour vulnerability *index*<sup>31</sup> measures the global scope of instability (unemployment, temporary work and part time jobs), currently placing it at 56.5% for the overall wage-earning population (employed or unemployed), more than twelve points above the EU mean, after having increased by eight points since 2007. Similarly, the last version of the employment quality index which is created annually by the OECD, describing rates of employment, temporary employment and long term unemployment, situated Spain, with a score of 2.4 out of 10, in the second to last place in a list of the 34 most developed countries in the OECD. Spain dropped ten positions since 2012 and was next to Greece (1.5), Turkey (3.8), Portugal (4.1), Slovakia (4.3) and Hungary (4.8) the only countries to fail in said classification.

During this period, there was also strong wage devaluation, causing a reverse redistribution, with cuts in the aggregate payment of wage earners by three percentage points of the GDP (from 55 to 52 per cent) between 2009 and 2014. At the same time, corporate benefits increased by the same proportion (from 45 to 48 per cent) with the resulting increase in inequality (over three points in the index by Gini, being the OECD country in which it increased the most) and of poverty, which was situated at 13.4 million individuals (29.2% of the population, five points above the EU mean) who are at risk of social exclusion.<sup>32</sup>

At the same time, the imposed labour reform reinforced the unilateral power of companies, leading to a lifting of the sectorial agreements and promoting the individualization of labour relations<sup>33</sup> at the macro level, in a strong impact both on the structure and the coverage of collective bargaining as well

---

<sup>31</sup> PRIETO, C. and PÉREZ DE GUZMÁN, S. “La precarización en el marco de la norma flexible-empresarial del empleo”. In: TORRES, C. ed. *España 2015. Situación social*. Madrid: CIS, 2015, pp. 629-639.

<sup>32</sup> OXFAM. *Una economía al servicio del 1%*. Informe 210, 2015.

<sup>33</sup> BAYLOS, A. *Negociar en crisis. Negociación colectiva en los países del sur de Europa*. Albacete: Bomarzo Otaegui, 2014; OTAEGUI, A. “Desequilibrio negocial y debilitamiento del actor sindical como efectos de la reforma laboral”. *Cuadernos de Relaciones Laborales*. Vol. 32, n.2, 2014, pp. 337-360.

as on the employment regulations. And at a micro level, it led to the standardisation of abusive business practices, directly limiting worker rights and the capacity for trade union intervention. While considerable, and at times, dramatic, these changing circumstances caused by the crisis have had led to long term structural trends that have radically modified the scenario since the 1980s, including the global actors and institutions involved in labour relations<sup>34</sup> and more specifically, those of the European Union.<sup>35</sup>

In Spain, the democratic normalisation initiated late in the 1970s precisely when the European model (Keynesian economics, Ford-based production, corporate labour relations and the Welfare state) started showing signs of fatigue following its *golden years*<sup>36</sup> of economic growth and social cohesion, revealed an added difficulty. This foundational *anomaly* would condition both the normative and institutional representation of interests such as the organizational and strategic development of the main actors, particularly of the unions, which only as of the 1990s began to resemble the membership patterns of the rest of Europe.<sup>37</sup>

### 3. Associative resources of Spanish trade unionism

Having identified the determinant factors and development patterns of European trade unionism, our objective now lies in analysing their validity in the Spanish case, considering its historic evolution and structural composition. The proposed hypotheses refer, first, to the *quantitative expansion and qualitative adaptation process* followed by Spanish trade unionism, from its late and difficult historic configuration, and which we consider different in the first case and convergent in the second, with respect to the European trade union dynamic. The goal is to determine whether, as the recurrent media topic predicts (at times, even with academic support) Spanish trade unionism is characterized by its negligible membership and representation, limited to the most traditional of sectors (Fordist industries) and the most traditional of groups (men, low skilled and in manual occupations), without a presence in the emerging areas of the business and

---

<sup>34</sup> BACCARO, L. *Labour, Globalization and Inequality: Are Trade Unions Still Redistributive?* Ginebra: OIT, Instituto Internacional de Estudios Laborales, DP/192/2008.

<sup>35</sup> FERNER, A. and HYMAN, R. *La transformación de las relaciones laborales en Europa*. Madrid: Ministerio de Trabajo, 2002.

<sup>36</sup> HOBSBAWM E. *Historia del siglo XX*. Barcelona: Crítica, 1995.

<sup>37</sup> BENEYTO, P. "El sindicalismo español en perspectiva europea: de la anomalía a la convergencia". *Cuadernos de Relaciones Laborales*. Vol. 26, n.1, 2008, pp. 57-88.

occupational structure. Or, to the contrary, if it has experienced a major process of growth, adaptation to its changing environment, diversification of its profiles and trajectories and broad coverage of its institutional intervention in collective bargaining and labour relations. Therefore, we analyse the associative resources (presence/audience) of Spanish trade unionism based on the data available regarding the evolution and composition of its membership and electoral representation, provided by union and institutional sources as well as surveys and electoral records.

The legal regulation of Spanish unionism began during the late 1970s (laws 19/1977 on trade union association and 8/1980 of the Worker's Statute), when the expansive trend of European unionism reverted as a result of the economic crisis and of the various social changes caused by the same. In the Spanish case, this was further complicated by the uncertainties arising with the political transition. The result of this process was a dual channel model that was associative (direct membership) and elective (delegated representation). Its impact on the development of unionism and labour relations in Spain has been the subject of on-going debate (both in the trade union area as well as in legal and academic fields) in regards to unequal degree of functionality.<sup>38</sup>

It is a system with inclusive will which, on the one hand, appears to discourage direct membership as it globalizes the coverage of union intervention, while on the other hand, it contributes to indirectly extending the area of influence of electoral representation. At the same time, it also provides clear democratic legitimacy. In an initial phase, which would extend until the late 1980s, union strategy was based on the design and implementation of the *logic of influence*, strengthening its representative dimension, in order to legitimize its intervention and ensure its capacity to dialogue with business (within and outside of the work centres) and public institutions. For this, the dual model was fundamentally designed around the electoral axis, both in terms of normative regulation as well as syndicate strategy. In the first case, elective representation became the key to the system given that not only did it ensure defence and dialogue between the company workers (delegates/committees), but also determined aggregate union representation (arts. 6 and 7 of the LOLS) and therefore, the rights to the overall effectiveness of collective bargaining (arts. 87-89 of the WS) and of institutional representation.

### **3.1. Membership**

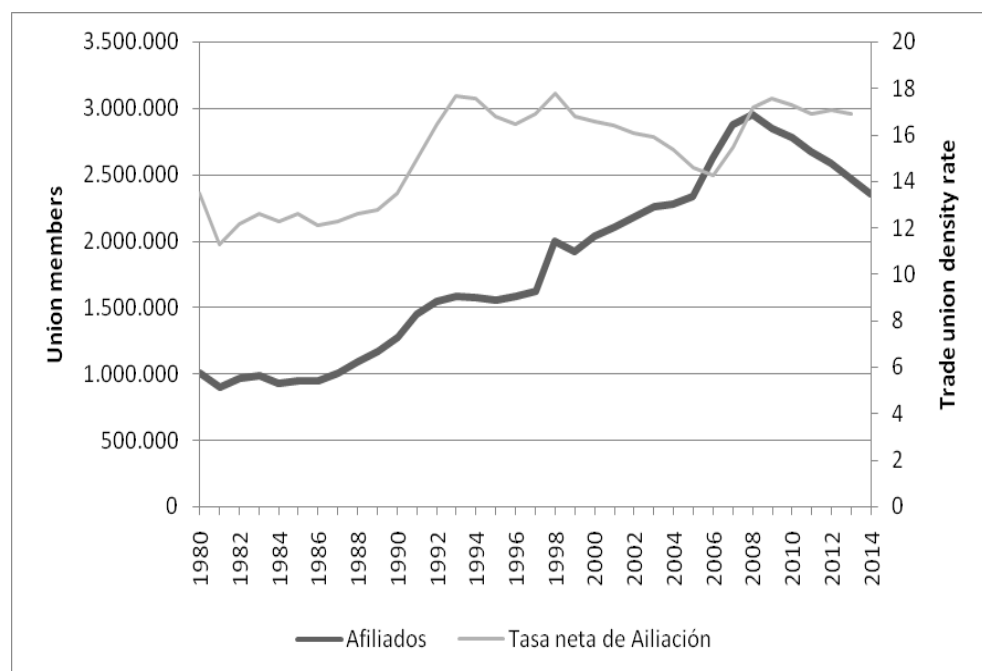
---

<sup>38</sup> BENEYTO, P. "Fortalezas y debilidades del sistema español de representación sindical". *Gaceta Sindical. Reflexión y debate*. n.16, 2011, pp. 195-223.

Initially, union membership responded mainly to ideological and identity-based incentives and to defensive strategies, having very low numbers (approximately one million members for the overall collective of trade unions), with a declining trajectory during the early period. At the same time, successive union elections broadened their area of influence and intervention, allowing analysts to define the Spanish model as being a “unionism of voters”<sup>39</sup> with a “greater audience than presence”<sup>40</sup>. It was situated in an intermediate area between an *informal movement* and a *formal organization*, jeopardising the effectiveness of its recruitment plans and membership loyalty.

**Graph 1. Trade union membership in Spain (1980-2014).**

**Absolute values and relative share**



Source: ICTWSS

<sup>39</sup> MARTINEZ-LUCIO, M. “España: regular el empleo y la fragmentación social”. In: FERNER, A. and HYMAN, R. *La transformación de las relaciones laborales en Europa*. Op. Cit., pp.547-585.

<sup>40</sup> ROJO, E. “Las tareas pendientes”. *Política y Sociedad*. n. 5, 1990, pp. 31-44.



In the mid-1980s, a change occurred in the mechanisms of union membership, from the model based on *ideology-identity* to one based on a more *instrumental and practical membership logic* and the generic creation of *material and sociability incentives*, derived from the growing capacity in the area of the defence of collective interests (the new model of social consensus, expansion of coverage and of the collective bargaining agenda, union action within the company, social mobilization). While union membership decreased in the majority of European Union countries<sup>41</sup>, in Spain it doubled its members between 1988 and 2000, until eventually surpassing two million (*Graph 1*), while at the same time, developing a process of change and adaptation of its morphology, from a Fordist homogeneity (men, low-skilled, manual jobs in industry and low wages) to more heterogeneous profiles, representing the new occupational structure and more similar to the modern European unionism.

Since then, the membership indicators have revealed a clearly pro-cyclic behaviour (*Table 2*), with growth periods in the expansion phase exceeding those of the reference wage earning population (+41.3 and +39.1 per cent, respectively between 2000 and 2007) and with decreases during the recession (-18.0 and -15.3 per cent from 2007 to 2014), although the reversal of the union trend took a few years to be consolidated.

**Table 2. Evolution of the wage earning population and trade union membership in Spain, 2000-2014**

	Wage earning population		Union membership		
	No. (thousands)	Var. in %	No. (thousands)	Var. in %	Net rate
2000	12,285,7	---	2,037	---	16.6
2001	12,786,7	+4.1	2,110	+3.6	16.4
2002	13,141,7	+2.8	2,187	+3.6	16.1
2003	14,127,4	+7.5	2,260	+3.3	15.9
2004	14,720,8	+4.2	2,278	+0.8	15.4
2005	15,502,0	+5.3	2,338	+2.6	14.6

<sup>41</sup> BERNACIAK, M., GUMBELL-MCCORMIC, R. and HYMAN, R. *El sindicalismo europeo: ¿de la crisis a la renovación?* Op.Cit.

2006	16,208,1	+4.5	2,622	+12.1	14.3
2007	17,095,0	+5.4	2,879	+9.8	15.5
2008	16,681,0	-2.4	2,953	+2.6	17.2
2009	15,680,7	-5.9	2,844	-3.7	17.6
2010	15,346,8	-2.1	2,777	-2.6	17.3
2011	15,105,5	-1.6	2,678	-3.6	16.9
2012	14,573,4	-3.5	2,583	-4.3	17.1
2013	14,069,1	-3.5	2,472	-4.3	16.9
2014	14,483,1	+2.9	2,360	-4.5	16.3

Source: INE-EPA and ICTWSS

Overall, direct membership and social legitimacy grows when the unions are perceived as being instruments of improvement for the workers' labour and social conditions, both at a micro (work centre, legal services) and a macro (collective bargaining, dialogue, institutional and social pressure) level. Conversely, it declines when these are weakened and/or lose effectiveness and visibility, as has occurred over recent years, as a result of the crisis, labour reform and even their own shortcomings and errors.

As for membership structure (*Table 3*), according to a follow-up of the membership records and data provided by the *Survey on Quality of Life at Work* (ECVT -*Encuesta de Calidad de Vida en el Trabajo*-), conducted annually by the corresponding Ministry between 1999 and 2010, which we have thoroughly analysed in previous studies<sup>42</sup>, the major transformation of its internal composition, consisting of sociodemographic, occupational and contractual variables, is highlighted:

<sup>42</sup> BENEYTO, P. "Crisi i renovació del sindicalisme. L'afiliació a CC.OO. i UGT". *Revista de Treball*. n. 9, 1989, pp. 147-162; BENEYTO, P. *Reivindicación del sindicalismo*. Madrid: Bomarzo, 2012; ALÓS, R. *Afiliación y representación del sindicalismo en España y en la Unión Europea*. Informe núm. 96. Madrid: Fundación 1º de Mayo, 2014.

-by *gender*: with data from the ECVT corresponding to 2010, the membership rate for males (20.6%) is higher than that of females (16.8%). However, the incorporation and permanence rhythm of women is found to be higher, changing from 19.8% of the membership in 1980 to 41.5% currently, a percentage that is similar to the European mean (43.8%), although continuing to be lower than their participation rate in the active population of the country (47.9%).

- by *age* the greater rates of union membership are found in the central segment (22.5%), being lower in the extremes: while younger workers under the age of 35 represent 27.5% of overall employment, they only make up 19.2% of union membership, with said membership increasing with age and education level.

**Table 3. Structure of trade union membership in Spain**

	Rate		Rate		Rate
TOTAL	18.9	OCUPATION		TOTAL	18.9
GENDER		Technicians	21.2	LENGTH OF SERVICE	
Men	20.6	Administrative	21.9	Less than 5 years	11.8
Women	16.8	Qualified W.	17.1	6-10	16.5
AGE GROUPS		Unqualified	18.4	11-15	22.4
From 16 to 34 years	13.2	ACTIVITY		Over 15	33.1
35-54	22.5	Agriculture	8.1	CONTRACT	
From 55 to 64	18.1	Indus-Construc.	17.5	Permanent	21.2
NATIONALITY		Services	25.8	Temporary	11.7
Spanish	20.3	SECTOR		WORKING HOURS	
Foreign	7.2	Private	15.0	Full time	19.5
EDUCATION LEVEL		Public	31.2	Part time	14.9
No studies	19.4	COMPANY SIZE		UNION REPRESENT.	
Primary	16.9	-10 employees	7.3	Yes	30.0

Secondary	18.4	10-49	12.3	No	9.6
University	20.6	50-250	17.9	Don't know	6.9
		+ 250	30.2		

Source: ECVT'2010

- by *nationality*, the membership rate of immigrants is three times lower than that of natives, being an under-represented group in terms of membership with respect to their weight in the working population (3.9 and 10.8 per cent, respectively).

- in composition by *activity branches*, the greatest transformation has occurred. Whereas in 1980 there was a strong concentration in the traditional sectors of industry and construction (66.7% of the membership and 34.8% of the total wage-earning population), thirty years later there is a more balanced relationship (23.9 and 24.2 per cent, respectively), with the public services having 38.1 of the members and the private services having 36.3 per cent.

- as for the *contractual variables*, we only have the data provided by the Survey on Quality of Life at Work (ECVT) according to which, in 2010 unionism rates were reduced by half for unemployed and workers with temporary contracts and part time workers, while at the same time, it increased with company size and the existence of representation structures in the same (delegates, committees, union branches), with these last two variables having the greatest correlation rates with union membership.<sup>43</sup>

The evolution and distribution of union membership are derived, therefore, from demand factors (company and employment structure, labour management models), just the opposite of that defended by labour deregulation and union de-legitimization ideologies. Such arguments blame labour market segmentation on supply factors, in other words, on the very workers themselves and unions who defend themselves without solidarity for others, marginalizing unemployed and peripheral workers.

These strategies of corporate management and legal deregulation of hiring have promoted labour market segmentation<sup>44</sup>, creating a precariousness that

<sup>43</sup> CALLEJA, J.P. *Estrategias de revitalización de los sindicatos españoles*. Tesis Doctoral. Universidad de Valencia, 2016.

<sup>44</sup> PRIETO, C., ARNAL, M. and CAPRILE, M. *La calidad del empleo en España: una aproximación teórica y empírica*. Madrid: Ministerio de Trabajo, 2009.

hinders membership and collective action.<sup>45</sup> It is not the unions or the current model of social partnership and collective bargaining which has caused segmentation: quite to the contrary, they have undergone processes of integrated management and universal coverage, collectively articulating power resources from the centre in order to extend coverage of rights and collective guarantees to the periphery, as accredited by various European comparative studies.<sup>46</sup>

Ultimately, the previously described trade union membership patterns coincide with those of European unionism, although the Spanish case may have a greater impact, given the specific features of its occupational structure (greater rates of unemployment and precariousness, large concentration of employment in micro-companies). By the same token, the crisis has highlighted other more cyclical and specific factors of the Spanish case such as the fragmentation of membership paths and increasing levels of instability and rotation of the same.

### 3.2. Representation

As indicated, associative and institutional resources of unions maintain close ties, with the *presence* in work centres and productive sectors (membership, organization), correlating with their electoral *audience* (structure and representation coverage) and with both the mechanisms and processes of *influence* (collective bargaining, institutional participation, social mobilization). In aggregate terms, the overall scope of said union indicators continues to be, in the Spanish case, a sequence that goes from a membership rate ranging from 16 to 19 per cent of the working population to that of representativeness that almost triples said figure and a collective bargaining coverage that practically quadruples it, at least until the limitations caused by the 2012 labour reform. The functionality of this dual channel system is ambivalent given the leading role that is conferred to the representative bodies (delegates and business committees), just as the universal effectiveness of that agreed by said bodies in collective bargaining may discourage membership and direct participation (free rider effect). It is also true that with this, the area of union influence is extended considerably and its social legitimacy is reinforced, operating even as a membership factor in companies and sectors with great representative implementation. The described correlation between

<sup>45</sup> ALÓS, R., BENEYTO, P., JÓDAR, P. and VIDAL, S. “La dinámica sindical y las trayectorias de sus miembros”. *Política y Sociedad*. Vol. 50, n.3, 2013, pp. 1065-1096.

<sup>46</sup> REGINI, M. “I mutamentinella regolazione del lavoro e il resistentibile declino dei sindacati europei”. *Stato e Mercato*, nú. 67, 2003, pp. 83-108; BENEYTO, P. “Presenza, audience e influenza sindacale. Il caso spagnolo”. *Quaderni Rassegna Sindacale*. Vol. 33, n.1, 2008, pp. 87-111.

membership and representation operates, therefore, in a complementary direction (*Table 4*), such that the mean coverage of the representation (57%) increases when there are members and decreases when there are none (75 and 19 per cent, respectively).

**Table 4**

**Union representation in companies, 2010**

**Coverage rate**

	YES	NO	DK/NC
TOTAL	47.4	37.2	15.3
ACCORDING TO SIZE OF WORK CENTRE			
From 1 to 9 employees	25.2	57.2	17.6
From 10 to 49	48.8	35.6	15.6
From 50 to 249	66.9	17.9	15.2
250 and more employees	81.9	9.6	8.5
ACCORDING TO ACTIVITY SECTOR			
Agriculture	31.6	43.5	24.9
Industry	57.0	31.6	11.4
Construction	31.5	52.8	15.7
Commerce and hotel industry	34.3	47.7	18.0
Transport and communications	59.7	31.6	8.7
Financial services	64.3	24.8	10.9
Business services	40.0	41.9	18.1
Public services	61.5	23.9	14.6
Personal and community services	17.5	62.2	20.2

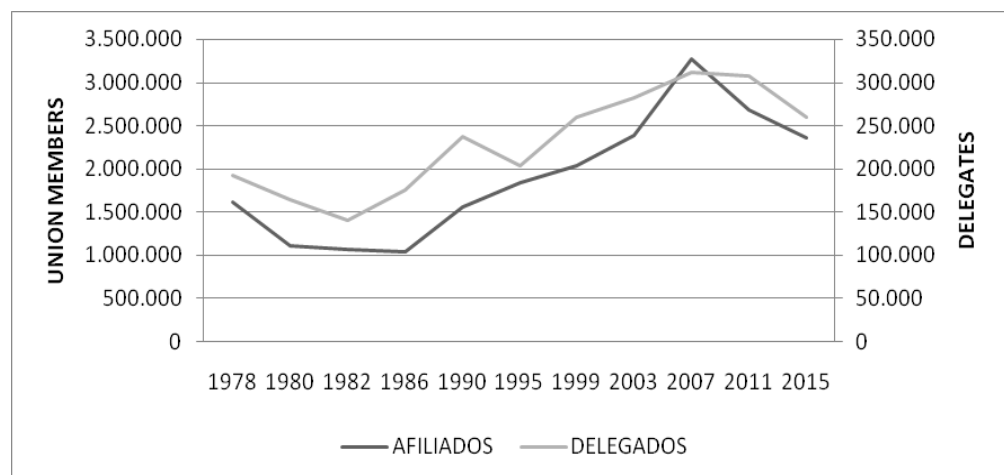
UNION MEMBERSHIP			
Yes	75.4	19.0	5.6
No	40.9	41.5	17.6
TOTAL			
Projection over total wage earning population	7,104,700	5,578,600	2,295,900

Source: Ministry of Labour, ECVT

The follow-up and analysis carried out on the electoral data<sup>47</sup> highlights that the structure and evolution of the union representation has similar patterns as those that were described for membership (*Graph 2*), noting that during the expansive phase of the cycle (1995-2007) the coverage of union representation increased by 52.5%, until reaching 312,017 elected delegates, then lowering to 260,345 elected between 2011 and 2015, in a total of 70,000 companies, having a total staff of 6,800,000 employees and a mean electoral participation rate of 67.9% of the staff.

### Graph 2

#### Evolution of membership and union representation, 1978-2015



<sup>47</sup> ALÓS, R., BENEYTO, P., JÓDAR, P., MOLINA, O. and VIDAL, S. *La representación sindical en España*. Madrid: Fundación 1º de Mayo, 2015; BENEYTO, P. *Reivindicación del sindicalismo*. Madrid: Bomarzo, 2012.

Left axis: evolution of number of members  
 Right axis: evolution of number of elected union delegates

Source: Spanish Ministry of Labour and trade unions SIC-CC.OO.

As for the coverage of representation and the evolution of its results, it should be noted that the regulatory policy of the system excludes companies whose staff consists of less than 6 employees, and, according to the corresponding directory of the National Statistics Institute, there are currently 1,187,234 such companies with a staff that exceeds three million wage earners. Therefore, the reference universe of the representation is made up of 245,000 companies and approximately twelve million workers, of which over half participate regularly in said elections.

**Table 5**  
**Workers representation, 1978-2015**

	Total Deleg.	CC.OO.		UGT		Others		Non members	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1978	193,112	66,540	34.5	41,897	21.7	25,953	13.4	58,725	30.4
1980	164,617	50,817	30.8	48,194	29.3	22,053	13.4	43,553	26.5
1982	140,770	47,016	33.4	51,672	36.7	25,058	17.8	17,024	12.1
1986	175,363	59,230	33.8	69,427	39.6	33,998	19.4	12,708	7.2
1990	237,261	87,730	36.9	99,737	42.0	41,387	17.4	8,407	3.5
1995	204,586	77,348	37.8	71,112	34.7	49,495	24.2	6,631	3.2



1999	260,285	98,440	37.8	96,770	37.2	57,006	21.9	8,969	3.1
2003	283,075	110,208	38.9	103,805	36.7	69,062	24.4	---	---
2007	312,017	122,079	39.1	114,973	36.8	74,965	24.0	---	---
2011	308,463	116,431	37.7	110,540	35.8	81,492	26.4	---	---
2015	260,345	93,877	36.1	86,267	33.1	80,201	30.8	---	---

Source: Ministry of Labour and SIC-CC.OO.

With regards to the results of the union elections (*Table 5*), it should be noted, first, that the consolidation of CC.OO. and UGT as the two most broadly supported options (between both of them, we find more than two thirds of the total elected representatives) gives them the legal status of the “most representative organizations” overall, and thereby ensuring their intervention at all levels of collective bargaining and institutional participation. The crisis’ impact is also seen here, with a reduction in the total number of representatives elected and in some significant changes in their composition. In the first case, between 2007 and 2015 the coverage of union representativeness decreased by 16.5%, although not in a homogenous manner, with a greater decrease in the large confederations (-23.1% in CC.OO. and -24.9% in UGT) and recording slight increases for the other minority and corporatist options. Finally, it is this accumulative representativeness in the elections held in the work centres that serves to legitimize the institutional power of the unions and their intervention in collective bargaining (*Table 6*), both for the companies and for the sectors, with predominating levels of coverage, despite the limitations imposed by the most recent labour reform.

**Table 6**

**Union representation in collective bargaining (2007-2015)**

	Agreements		Workers		Representatives	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
2007						

CC.OO.	3,213	65.1	9,488,000	96.6	10,336	39.0
UGT	3,213	65.1	9,543,000	97.1	10,063	37.9
Others	1,585	32.1	2,830,000	28.8	4,480	16.9
Non members	713	14.4	147,000	1.5	1,657	6.2
Total	4,936	---	9,825,600	---	26,536	100.
2015*						
CC.OO.	1,601	64.0	5,135,800	97.9	8,591	39.8
UGT	1,593	63.7	5,129,400	97.8	8,382	38.8
Others	1,043	41.7	1,647,700	31.4	3,694	17.1
Non members	306	1.2	57,100	10.9	892	4.1
Total	2,501	---	5,247,500	---	21,559	100.

Source: CES and Spanish Ministry of Labour

(\*) Provisional data

#### 4. Conclusions

The associative resources of the unions (membership and representation) have revealed indicators that are particularly sensitive in evaluating both changes *in* the labour market environment (structural resources) as well as *regarding* labour relations (institutional resources). A study of their structure, evolution and trajectories is therefore quite relevant, particularly during periods of crisis. After reviewing the specialized literature on trade union membership in Europe, we have identified distinct variables (structural, circumstantial, institutional, sociodemographic) according to their impact on the same and recent evolution, finding that although there has been some generalized weakening the diversity between the main labour relation systems remains. In the specific case of Spain, empirical evidence allows us to question the clichés existing regarding the inexorable decline of unionism since, as we have verified, a major quantitative increase occurred during the upward phase of the economic cycle and it was resistant (yet not exempt from

limits and even contradictions) during the recession, as well as on its capacity for adaptation to changes in occupational structure, given its membership patterns that are comparable to those of European unionism.

