

The gender equality outcomes of national bargaining under neoliberal convergence:

A longitudinal analysis of Belgium (1973- 2018)

Veronika Lemeire

veronika.lemeire@uhasselt.be

Patrizia Zanoni

patrizia.zanoni@uhasselt.be

IREC 2018, Leuven, 11 september 2018

Session 4:

Gender equality, representation and employment

SEIN

Identity, Diversity &
Inequality Research



UHASSELT

Gender equality bargaining in coordinated IR

Dickens 2000, Rubery & Fagan 1995, Hernes 1987, Appelt 1993

Advantages of centralized collective bargaining

- wage compression & minimum labour standards raise relative pay of women
- women's enhanced access to welfare state services & benefits

No automatic relation between GE and centralized IR

- Centralized consensus can exclude women's interests
- Pay equality may conflict with macro-economic goals
- Institutionalization of gender pay differentials

State retains key role in gender equality outcomes



Focus on specific opportunities or barriers of **national** IR systems

SEIN
Identity, Diversity &
Inequality Research

▶▶ **UHASSELT**

Political economy and neoliberal transformation of IR

Baccaro & Howell 2011, 2017; Howell 2016, Meardi 2018

Under European market integration and globalization

- Increasing convergence towards a neoliberal model
- Reduced equality potential of national IR systems
- Still some scope for institutions to limit inequality effects of crises

Key role of the national state

- Mediates neoliberal pressures
- Spurred by supra-national institutions
 - EEC & EMU
 - Macro-economic policy of EC after 2008 economic and government budget crises



Strong impact of **global & supra-national** factors

Reduced capacity of TU to negotiate egalitarian or redistributive agreements

SEIN
Identity, Diversity &
Inequality Research

▶▶ **UHASSELT**

How has **globalization** and **European market integration** affected the **gender equality** outcomes of the **labour market institutions** of a coordinated market economy?


Small, open coordinated market economy:

- Co-founder of EEC in 1957
- International trade: 169% of GDP
- Stock of inward FDI: 216 % of GDP (2014), 14th in the world

Highly coordinated system of industrial relations:

- Collective bargaining coverage rate of 96%
- Automatic extension of collective agreements

Gender indicators:

- GPG: 8,5% (hourly wages, private & public sector)
- 63,6 % female employment (20-64 y.)  EU goal: 75%
- Part-time work: 11% of men, 45% of women

Belgian institutions of social dialogue (private sector)

Economic level	Stakeholders	Institutions, bodies	Results
The economy as a whole (synonyms; national or intersectoral or multi-industry)	Employer confederations (FEB, UCM, UNIZO, BF), trade union confederations (FGTB, CSC, CGSLB) and government	Group of ten	Multi-industry agreements (since 1961)
		National Labour Council	Collective labour agreements (since 1968)
		Central Economic Council	Opinions
Sector (synonyms: industry or industrial sector)	Groups of affiliated trade unions and employer organisations	Joint Committees	Sectoral collective labour agreements
		Special Consultative Committees	Opinions
Company	Trade union delegates and officials	Works Councils	Company level collective labour agreements
		Committees for Safety, Health and Well-Being in the Workplace	Opinions

Source: Cassiers & Denayer (2010)

Women's representation in social dialogue: 27% women among negotiators of bi-annual agreements



Marie-Hélène Ska
CSC



Marc Leemans
ACV



Miranda Ulens
ABVV



Robert Verteneuil
FGTB



Mario Coppens
CGSLB/ACLVB



Sonja De Becker
Agrofront



Danny Van Assche
UNIZO



Pieter Timmermans
VBO-FEB



Bernard Gilliot
VBO-FEB



Bart Buysse
VBO-FEB



Pierre-Frédéric Nyst
UCM

Groep van 10
Groupe des 10

Case study methodology:

Longitudinal analysis of Belgian intersectoral agreements
from 1973 to date

Multiple data sources:

- Original texts of Intersectoral agreements
 - 1973-1976
 - 1986-2018
- 17 in-depth expert interviews (TU, employers, state actors)
- Secondary documents (TU documents, policy analyses,...)
- Economic, labour market, public finance indicators

Analysis:

- Key gender equality provisions
- Negotiation process and core issues
- Macro-economic context
- Political actors and state response

Bi-annual intersectoral agreements (IPA-AIP*)

- Covers whole private sector (nearly 3 million workers)
- 'Gentlemen's agreement'
- Three kind of declarations (Ficher 2013):
 - Mutual engagements
 - Recommendations to the government
 - Framework for sectoral and company-level negotiations
- Proposal submitted for vote to rank-and-file (rejected in 2005 & 2011)
- Explicit solidarity objective
- Social peace
- Wide range of issues: wages & working time, employment, training, flexibility, innovation, WLB,...

IPA-AIP*:interprofessioneel akkoord / accord interprofessionel

Four periods with distinct gender equality outcomes

First period: 1973-1976

- Recognition of equal pay between men and women
- Introduction of intersectoral minimum wage
- Paid maternity leave

Context: Last agreements of Fordist period
Period of social unrest

 Unsuccessful negotiations in 1977, 1979
Sectoral & company agreements continue

 From 1981 to 1985: 'unilateral' government response
to handle budget and unemployment crisis

Second period: 1986-1996

Gender equality outcomes:

- Positive action for women's employment
- Flexible Childcare fund
- Minimum wage increase, paternal leave (3d), night work for women

General context and negotiation outcomes:

- Free wage bargaining but appeal for wage moderation
- Employment fund for 'risk groups'

 1996: Competitiveness law (wage norm)

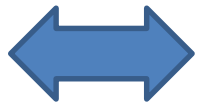
Third period: 1998-2008

Gender equality outcomes:

- Equal pay - gender neutral function classifications
- "Time credit" career leave - for better reconciliation (WLB)

General context of negotiations:

- Indicative wage norm
- Labour shortages in some regions
- Political pressure on function classifications and working time reduction



Wage increases to reduce GPG not excluded from wage norm

Fourth period: 2008 – 2017

Context:

- Banking crises, economic recession, Belgium in corrective arm
- Wage freeze, index jump, compulsory wage norm (2017)
- **Gender pay gap law of 2012**: compulsory procedure to revise sectoral function classifications

➤ **GPG law and the wage norm**

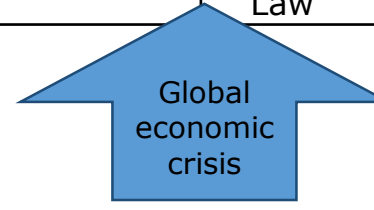
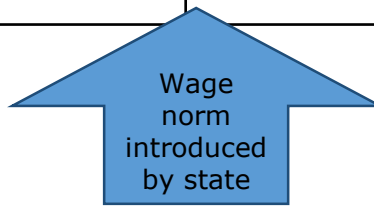
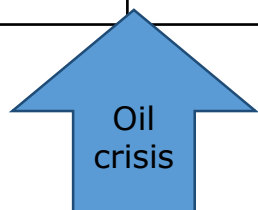
- Administrative note during wage freeze (2013)
- Outcome last IPA 2017-2018: Silent on gender pay gap

➤ **Austerity and 'time credit' leave**

- Gradually restricted to 'justified' care reasons (2012-2016)
- Increased allowance for single parents (2017)

Relation between gender outcomes and macro-economic situation

Inter-sectoral agreements	1973-1976	1987-1996	1999-2008	2009-2018
Gender equality outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Principle of equal pay • Introduction of minimum wage • Paid maternity leave 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimum wage increase • childcare infrastructure fund • Positive action • Paternity leave (3d) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equal pay - function classification • 'Time credit' leave • Paternity leave (10d) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adaptation and restriction of career leave towards care • Increased TC allocation for single
Macro-economic indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High inflation • Growing unemployment • Since 1960 (EEC): growing FDI 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better economic conjuncture • High state budget debt/ GDP 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic boom with labour scarcity in some regions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Banking and economic crisis • Recovery since 2016
Role of the state	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • From 1981: wage freeze, flexibility in working time, part-time work, career break system 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EMU convergence guidelines • 1989 and 1996 competitiveness law imposing wage moderation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Belgium enters Euro-zone • Negotiations on reform of welfare entitlements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Until 2014: Belgium in corrective arm of SGP pact • Gender pay gap Law (2012) • Wage freeze, strengthening of 1996 wage standard Law



Gender equality bargaining & outcomes:

- Fundamentally shaped by supranational factors
 - Impact of internat. economic conjuncture and econ. shocks
 - Gender only included in periods of economic upturn
 - Evolution of content of gender outcomes
- Shaped by broader context of social dialogue
 - Eg. (Un)employment, flexibility, wage norm...
- Role of the state in neoliberalisation
 - Contradictory and gendered: wage moderation & GPG
 - Gender equality is relative, dependent on economic criteria
 - 'Feminist' political alliances (at EU and national level) not strong enough to put gender equality objectives on the same level as economic objectives

Conclusion

National and organizational factors not sufficient for explaining gender equality bargaining outcomes

- Macro-economic & European context
- Contradictory and changing roles of the state
 - Equal pay & competitiveness
 - State budget & welfare entitlements

Further research:

- Longitudinal perspective on sectoral & company-level negotiations
- Gender effects of concession bargaining during crises
- Gender equality in tripartite welfare state reform after crisis

Suggestions?

... Thank you for listening