

Attitudes towards unions among the solo self-employed and willingness to organise:

Evidence in the Czech Republic

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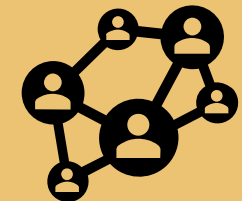
Technological changes



- new ways of connecting the labour supply and demand sides
- new ways of managing and controlling the work performed (autonomy)
- new forms of work organisation and
- global competition in earnings



- diversification of forms of employment
- change in the nature of work of self-employed persons



Self-employed are now a very heterogenous group with different interests

(Bozzon et Murgia, 2022; Gołaś et al., 2023; Eurofound, 2020; Murgia et al., 2020; Jansen and Sluiter, 2019)

Is there an increased need for protection and social security even among workers who run their own businesses?

Is there a demand for collective protection?

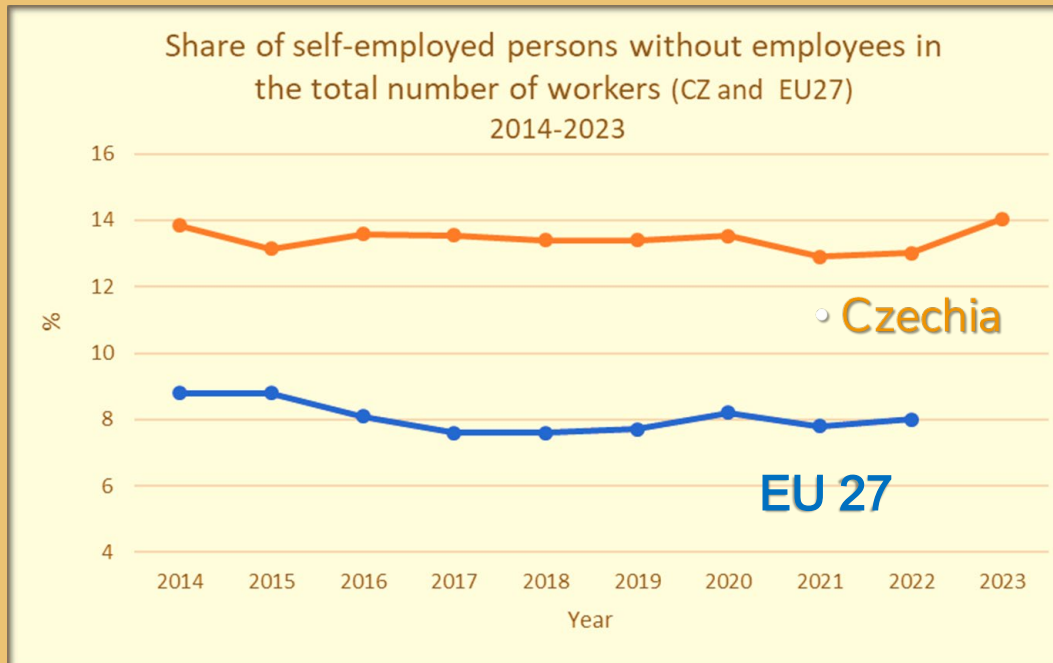
It can be assumed that workers at increased risk of precarity may be an 'attractive' target group for collective representation of interests through trade unions

Collective labour law



- European Commission guidelines (9/2022) clarifying the circumstances in which some solo self-employed workers can bargain collectively without breaching EU competition rules
- Guidelines - certainly do not force Member States to regulate the possibility of collective bargaining for self-employed workers
- Collective bargaining of solo-self employed persons –not common in the Czech Republic
- There is no specific national legal regulation in the Czech Republic
- EU Directive on platform work? (promotion of collective bargaining)

Solo self-employed persons in numbers: The Czech context



Solo self-employed persons make up approximately **14%** of the Czech workforce

The ratio of male to female entrepreneurs has been more or less stable over the last 10 years, at around **2:1** in favor of men.

The share of solo self-employed persons in Czechia has long been above the EU27 average. In 2022, the average share of self-employed workers without employees from the EU 27 working population was about 8 %.



Solo self-employed in the Czech Republic are usually more satisfied compared to employees with their work. They are doing business voluntarily, i.e. not because they have no other option, and also in the Eurostat and Eurofound classifications they show one of the lowest proportions of dependent self-employed persons without employees. Only 4% of self-employed workers consider being employed

Joining unions – Motives behind

Instrumental (TU as service organization)



Ideological (TU as the organisation through which we manifest our values)



Two follow -up projects:

- 1) Increasing capacity of Trade Unions in the Czech Republic (Innovation Norway funding)
- 2) Supporting trade unions to increase collective bargaining coverage (MoLSA funding)

Representative survey on the Czech working population (employees and solo self employed)

quota sampling, age: 18-65 years
data collected in October 2023.

sample of the self-employed
over-represented

employees: N=1380

solo self-employed: N=920

possible comparison of some
indicators over time (2003)



Solo self-employed persons organisation

Currently, trade union organization of the self-employed is a rarity.

Only 1.8% of self-employed workers (16 respondents) are unionized.

In most cases, this is probably a norm arising from the family environment, or the social environment.

Approximately 13% of self-employed workers without employees organise themselves through professional associations

These are mainly highly qualified specialists and technical and professional workers. More than half are university graduates. The proportion of people aged 50 above average.

Attitudes of the solo self-employed towards trade unions

7% of self-employed workers perceive unions as necessary for the protection of work interests. More than a third of self-employed workers recognise the need for trade unions, while another third believe that they are unnecessary for the protection of labour interests. More self-employed people than employees have a negative attitude towards TU (17 p.p. difference)

	Employees (in %)	Self-employed (in %)
Trade unions are essential to protect the interests of workers	19.9	7.4
Unions are necessary to protect workers' interests, but it can also be done without them	40.0	35.4
Unions are redundant to protect workers' interests	13.8	30.2
Unions are more detrimental to workers' interests, it's better without them	3.3	6.6
I do not know	23.0	20.4
Total	100.0	100.0

Willingness to organise in trade unions

2.8% of self-employed want to join TU in the future
14% did not know.



	Positive answers (in %)		Positive answers (in %)
Legal aid for claiming unpaid work	58	Ensuring and financing activities	43
Assistance with payment of compulsory contributions (social and health) in case of emergency	51	Active role of the union in facilitating labour market contacts supply/demand for services.	43
Offer of special insurance (insurance discounts) in case of loss, damage to tools, liability insurance	48	Social security advice in inactive phases of life (parental leave, retirement, etc.)	40
Social assistance, e.g. in the form of a loan, allowance in times of absenteeism or illness.	45	General support for business on the market (political lobby)	38
Legal assistance in case of non-(compliance with) OSH	45	Legal advice on non-employment matters.	38
Assistance with negotiating appropriate wages for work done	44	Assistance with better access to mortgages/credit (financial advice)	33

Reaction to a specific service offer

- If the self-employed are offered a specific range of services and benefits, then **most of them are willing** to consider joining trade union.
- Among the self-employed, there is a "**hard core**" of those who will not be tempted by any of the services offered: approximately **one-fifth of the self-employed without employees**. These are mainly university graduates, specialists and technical professionals. They also belong to the higher age category of over 50 years of age

Reaction to a specific service offer

- On the other hand, a high potential can be assumed for approximately 42% of self-employed workers, who responded that they would consider joining a trade union for more than half of the service options offered.
- These respondents are relatively more likely to be male and in the middle age group 30-49. The degree of job autonomy or right-left political orientation does not affect the willingness to join a union for the specific services offered.



How is it with different groups of the self-employed and their willingness to organize? I.

We constructed a **typology** of the solo self –employed according to the degree of dependence on one client and the degree of autonomy (we were inspired by EWCS indicators measuring autonomy and construct of „**the dependent self-employed worker**“ . However, we decided to add also variables on satisfaction with wages and job satisfaction.

(Methods: Hierarchical cluster analysis, K-means cluster analysis, Contingency tables for definition of the groups)

Three groups of the solo self-employed emerged:

- 1) **Autonomous – satisfied:** higher earnings, university degree, high control over own bussiness
- 2) **Autonomous -precarious:** lower earnings, dissatisfied, men prevailing, lower education, not able to perform their work in standard employment
- 3) **Non- autonomous:** relatively satisfied, however not able to hire or dismiss employees, low control over own bussiness, dependency on one main client.

How is it with different groups of the self-employed and their willingness to organize? II.

Methods: Contingency tables, Correspondence analysis

Results: Self-employed groups with lower levels of autonomy or high levels of precarity **have not declared** a higher willingness to organise themselves in unions or possibly use their services.

It is rather the **group of those autonomous satisfied** and well stabilized solo entrepreneurs who are open to the option of unionisation when there is some service behind it.

However, it seems that there is **inner polarity within the group** of autonomous satisfied solo self-employed persons, since they form a substantial part of this already mentioned extreme „hard core“ of those refusing all possible services that can be offered by TU. And thus also a TU membership.

Conclusions and discussion

- Based on sociodemographic characteristics and other determinants of attitudes towards unions and the willingness of self-employed workers to unionise, it can be concluded that we can see **two distinct entities driven by different motives**.
 - 1) Attitudes (based more on value orientation, worldview, social capital)
 - 2) Willingness (influenced mainly by instrumental values)
- If trade unions or professional organisations are able to offer a sufficiently purposeful **diversified portfolio of services**, then a positive response can be expected from the group of self-employed persons
- Further research and analysis needed (planning in the following months)

Thank you for your attention

Questiones?

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