

Call for Papers, deadline 23 September 2025

Sixth European Labour History Network (ELHN) meeting

Barcelona-16-19 June 2026

Working Group: European Trade Unionism.

Call for Papers: The conceptions and contributions to Social Europe of European Trade Union Federations, the European Trade Union Confederation, and the Workers' Group of the European Economic and Social Committee of the EU.

The creation of the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) in 1973 marked a new departure in the history of European trade unionism by creating a specific common agenda and institutional links between European trade unions. It aimed to overcome ideological differences, and Cold War divides with a common action in the framework of the process of European integration. Such European transformation had been already announced and practiced in various European sections of international trade union federations (ITUFs). The building of a European integration of trade unions, therefore, was driven by both the institutional constraints marked by European institutions, and the concrete struggles of European dimension to which various ITUF had been confronted with the building of global capitalism.

This working group aims to bring together those researchers interested in the trade union organizations designed for concrete struggle at the European level. Departing from the network created for the 40th and 50th anniversaries of the history of the ETUC, this working group had focused on the contribution of national trade unions and key trade union leaders to the ETUC history. We aim to continue this cooperation by extending this reflection to the contribution of European trade union federations (ETUFs) to build European solidarity not just across borders, but also across sectors. Last, but not least, the group would like to engage into a historiographical dialogue with on-going research projects about the history of international trade unionism and international solidarity with a particular attention to the interaction between ETUFs and ITUFs, which resulted to a large extent in the progressive creation of global unions.

In 2026 the group aims to keep having papers on the history of the ETUC, but now extended to the creation and development of ETUFs recognized by the ETUC and originating in the European regional organizations of ITUFs. It also encourages to focus on key moments of European integration (Enlargements and European Treaties) and the role played at regional, national or European level by trade unions leaders and key officials. We would like to include also a particular attention to the means of this action by their contribution to European legislation through their representatives in the workers' group of the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) of the European Union.

We aim in particular for papers and panels addressing:

- The history of ETUC in particular during the role played by European Trade Unions leaders and officials during the period led by Mathias Hinterscheid (1976-1991) and Emilio Gabaglio (1991-2003).
- The history of ETUFs (and their predecessors) and in particular UNI-Europa, European Public Services Union, European Transport Federation and Industrial Europe.
- The history of European trade unionists who participated in the Workers' Group of the European Economic and Social Committee of the EU and its predecessors (ex. Consultative Committee of the European Coal and Steel Community).

This call for papers is not just addressed to historians of labor, but it also aims to engage into a reflection on how to write a new history of European trade unionism. Therefore, it welcomes presentations from industrial sociologists, political scientists, and labor law scholars interested to engage with historical dimensions of European and international trade unionism.

Deadline for submissions

The deadline is 23rd September 2025. The outcome of the selection will be communicated by 15th October 2025.

How to apply: Sending a 500-word abstract and short academic CV (max. 500 word) to both organisers:

- Sigfrido Ramírez Pérez, Max-Planck Institute for Legal History and Legal Theory, Frankfurt-am-Main, ramirez@lhlt.mpg.de
- Claude Roccati, Centre d'histoire sociale des mondes contemporains, Paris, clauderoccati@orange.fr

The proposal should include name, surname, current affiliation and contact details.