Trade unions and immigration in France

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Introduction

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Introduction
France's industrial development largely based on migration since 19th century.

TU opened to migrants from the early 20th century (internationalism)

Ambiguity between desire to protect and integrate (fight for new rights & against discrimination) and competition, protectionism (fights against undeclared work, demand for more control).
I - Immigration in France
1) A brief history
2) General overview of the population

In 2009 – 2010

- 7.5 million foreign born persons (11.6% of the total population)

In 2011

- 6 % of foreigners (leaving in France without having the French nationality)
- 8,7 % of migrants (born with a foreign origin outside France and leaving in France, wether being or not a French National).

Between 300 000 and 400 000 undocumented workers
immigrants and offsprings of immigrants by origin and age group
3) Migrants on the labour market

- **2010**: Immigrants and offsprings of migrants represents 27% of the age group 25-54.
- **2010**: 2.7 millions of migrants over 15 years old are present on the labour market (9.4 % of workers);
- Migrants are over represented in low qualified jobs (65 %) and amongst artisans and shopkeepers(10 %)
Unemployment rate

*Taux de chômage selon la nationalité en 2010*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nationalité française</th>
<th>Étrangers hors UE27</th>
<th>Ensemble étrangers</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hommes</td>
<td>Femmes</td>
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Champ : France métropolitaine, personnes actives âgées de 15 ans ou plus (âge courant).

Source : Insee, enquêtes Emploi du 1er au 4e trimestre 2010.
4) Public policies & debates

- Universalism: absence of recognition of race and ethnic minority as pertinent concepts

- From integration to diversity policies (Eberhard, 2010)

- The 16 November 2001 law. This declared it illegal for employers in the private sector to exclude or penalise anyone, directly or indirectly, ‘because of his or her real or assumed ethnicity, nationality or race, political opinions, union activities, religious convictions, physical appearance, family name, health or disability.’
Growing influence of National Front

- First present at legislative elections 1973 (0.4%)
- 25% of vote casts in March 2016 (0.1% in 1982 for similar departmental elections)
- Growing results in local elections
In 1997, the National Front attempted to run candidates for the Prud’hommes (labour tribunal) elections. To this effect, it created the Coordination Francaise Nationale des Travailleurs (CFNT). 57 lists of candidates out of the 206 presented by this coordination were overturned before the elections by local courts, stating that such lists based on ‘national preference’ are contrary to fundamental principles of the Republic. 16 out of the 18 elected representant were also invalidated.
Trade unions approaches to Migration
1) Respect of fundamental human rights beyond boundaries

- Constant trend: TU emphasise the right to work and the right to leave in decent conditions for all workers;
- Ambiguity throughout their history between desire to protect and integrate (fight for new rights & against discrimination) and competition, protectionism (fights against undeclared work, demand for more control).
Anti-colonialism & anti-imperialism expressed as early as the 1920s – 1930s. It became a strong political axis during the Algeria independence war (with strong support to FLN at least from CGT).

We can see here, the CGT poster for the 1st May 1947 is dedicated to peace in Algeria.
Traces of trade union support to migrants against expulsions can be found as early as the 1920s. It was then aimed at protected migrants trade union members and activists. A systematic action against expulsions appears to have been set up by the CFDT during the 1970s as testified by the leaflet presented here.
During the 1980s, French trade unions strongly reacted against the National Front campaigns and developed themself new campaigns against racism at work. This topic was actively researched by the CGT research institute during the 1990s, through several EU projects.
2) Citizenship: Undocumented workers

**Undocumented workers:** strikes began in 2008. Between 2009 and 2010, about 7000 workers on strike.
2) Trade unions and migrant voice today

The French Industrial relation system is based on four main principles:
- the institutionalisation of pluralism (despite the weakness of representative employer and employee organisations);
- a dual system of workplace representation of workers;
- tripartism at the level of national collective agreements and in the running of national welfare institutions linked to work;
- publicly-guaranteed minimum employment rights that provide protection to individual workers and a hierarchy of agreements such that local terms of employment cannot be worse than those established for the sector or nationally.
TU organised migrants from the early 20th century: general provision in early CGT statutes for accepting all workers regardless their nationality, beliefs, religion, sex…

- Specific immigrant’ branches - Polish minors in the North of France; Italian workers from quarries in the Parisian basin found during the 1920s. Principal motive: language and concentration of labour force in some sectors.
Trade union membership today

- French trade union membership is one of the lowest in Europe, around 8%. It is even lower amongst migrants, around 2%.

- French trade unions are essentially based in the public sector (restricted access to French and EU citizens) and large companies. Migrants workers are principally working for subcontracting companies.

- Trade unions recruit their members amongst permanent and qualified workers. Migrants workers occupy low qualified jobs and are often employed under precarious contracts.
From the 1990s, the CGT and the CFDT emphasised the diversity of their membership. We can see here the communication outputs designed for recruitment campaigns.
Trade unions responsibilities

- No figures at the moment apart from participation to congress ("Nationalité").

- Very few migrants in a situation to take responsibilities inside trade unions.

- Cooptation process that may exclude those who are in a position to take responsibilities.
Trade unions representatives

- French system based on dual representation: TU reps + elected representatives

- For a long time, French nationality (+ ability to read and write French) was required to be a TU rep inside companies. This is not anymore the case today.

- Foreign workers cannot be elected to labour tribunal (Prud’hommes)
3) Universalism and equal opportunities

• Universalism is the basic principle of action for French trade unions

• They do not dissociate their support for migrants from their support to other workers. Therefore, an action will be mainly presented as an action for the workers of such or such company or such or such sector, but it will rarely be mentioned that the workers in question were migrants or offspring of migrants.

• Trade unions engaged in action against discrimination (numerous cases brought to HALDE) and are active in negotiating charts on diversity in companies and national branch and inter-professionnal agreements.

• According to some authors (De Rudder), trade unions do not appear to deal with institutionalized racism / discrimination.
C.F.D.T.

TRAVAILLEURS
FRANÇAIS
IMMIGRÉS
TOUS
SOLIDAIRES
Provisional conclusion
• TU action towards migrants workers is becoming more visible since the implementation of anti-discrimination EU policy.

• Does not address so much institutionalised racism / discrimination.

• Mecanisms of institutionalised are reproduced inside trade unions.