

PRECARIOUS WORK IN EUROPE: CHALLENGES FOR UNIONS AND POLICY MAKING

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OUTLINE

- 1.** Precarious work in Europe: A brief overview
- 2.** The role of industrial relations institutions
 - Institutions as constraints
 - Institutional loopholes
- 3.** Implications for unions and policy-making

BACKGROUND RESEARCH

- Union strategies and agency work in Italy and in Germany, especially in the German metal sector (2010-ongoing)
- Employment restructuring in 10 incumbent telecommunications firms from the nineties until 2012. (together with Katja Sarmiento-Mirwaldt (Brunel University) and Prof. Virginia Doellgast (LSE and Cornell University), who led the ESRC project 2010-2013)

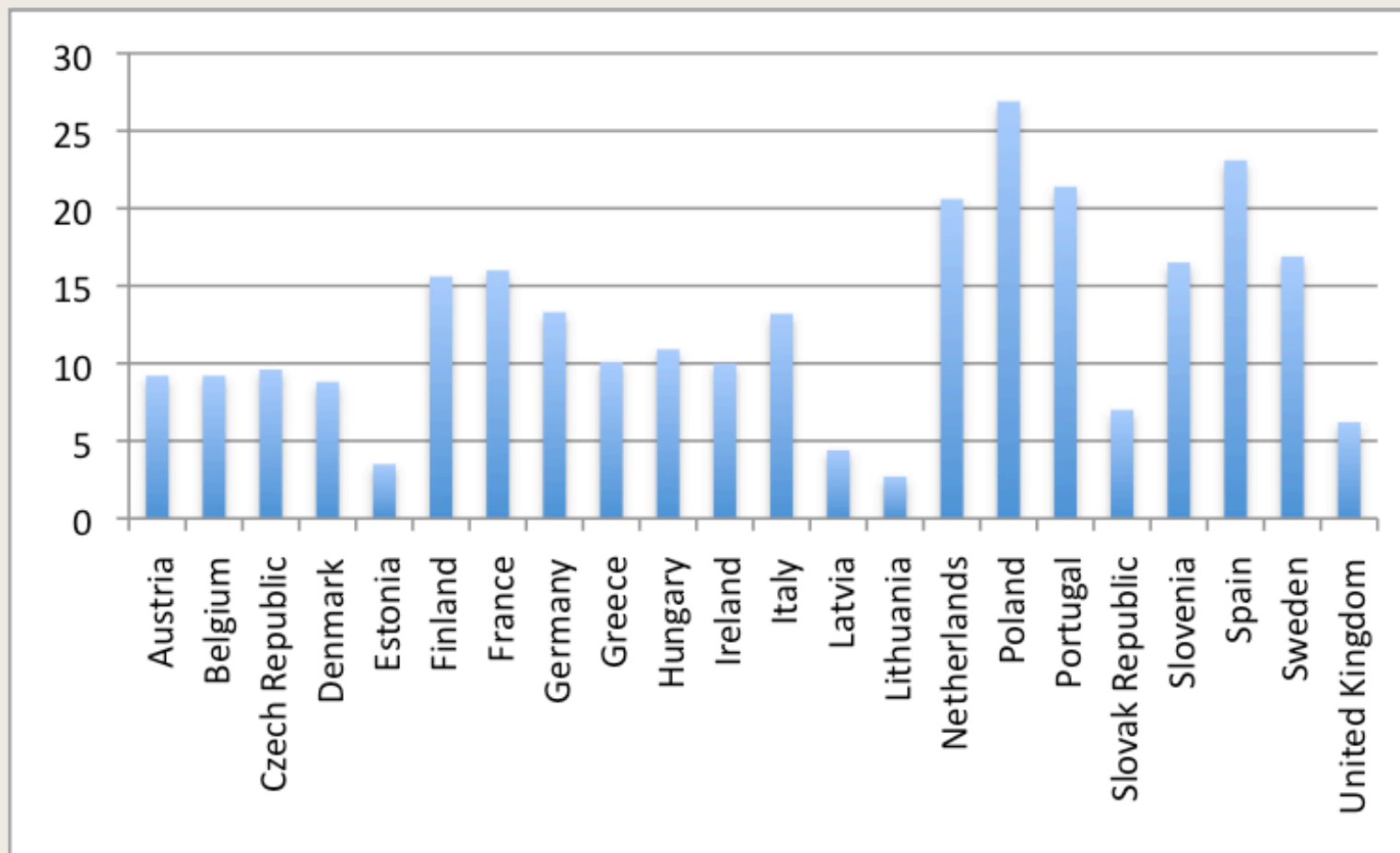
Three book chapters in “*The outsourcing challenge: organizing workers across fragmented production networks*”. Brussels: European Trade Union Institute”, edited by Jan Drahokoupil (2015).

<https://www.etui.org/Publications2/Books/The-outsourcing-challenge-organizing-workers-across-fragmented-production-networks>

PRECARIOUS WORK IN EUROPE

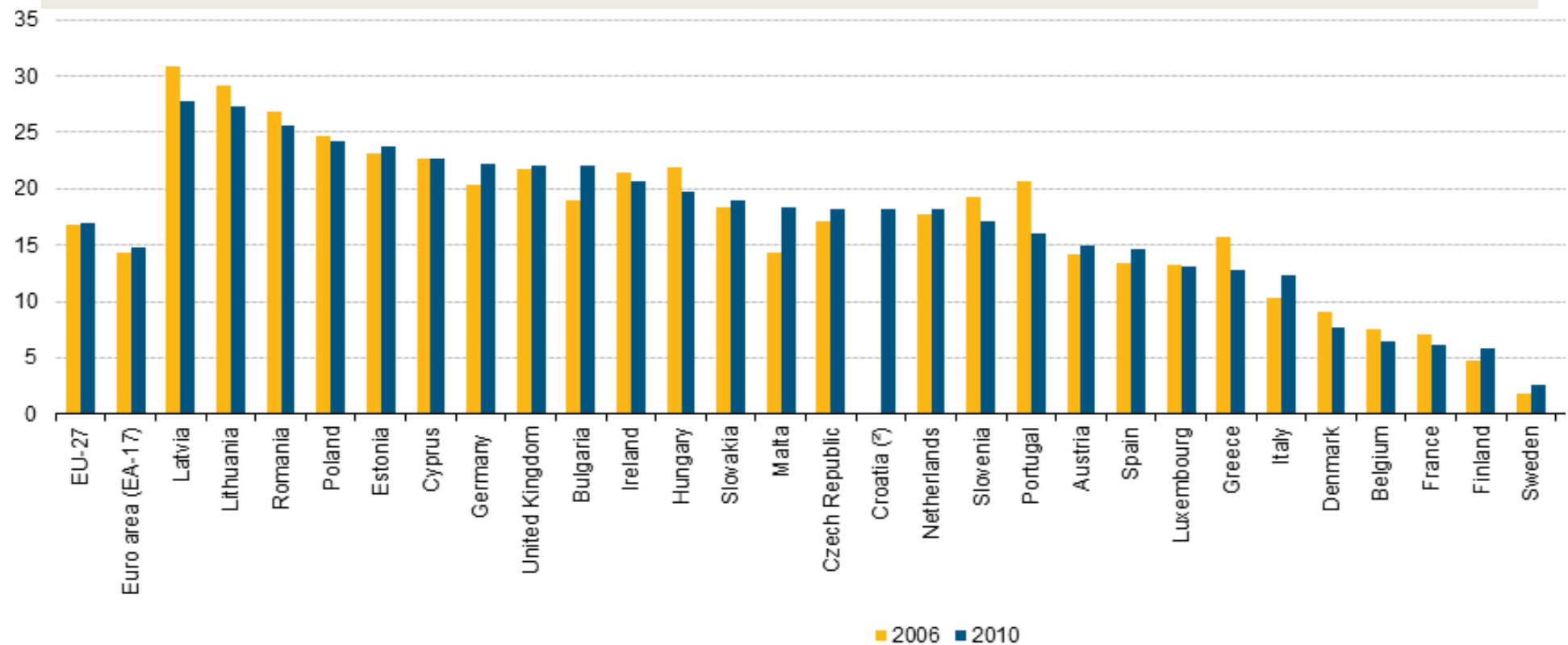
- Precarious work includes temporary work, agency work, self-employment, low-pay work, minijobs, zero-hour contracts, vouchers...
- Widespread in all EU countries
- ...but with important differences

FIXED-TERM WORK



Source: OECD

LOW PAY

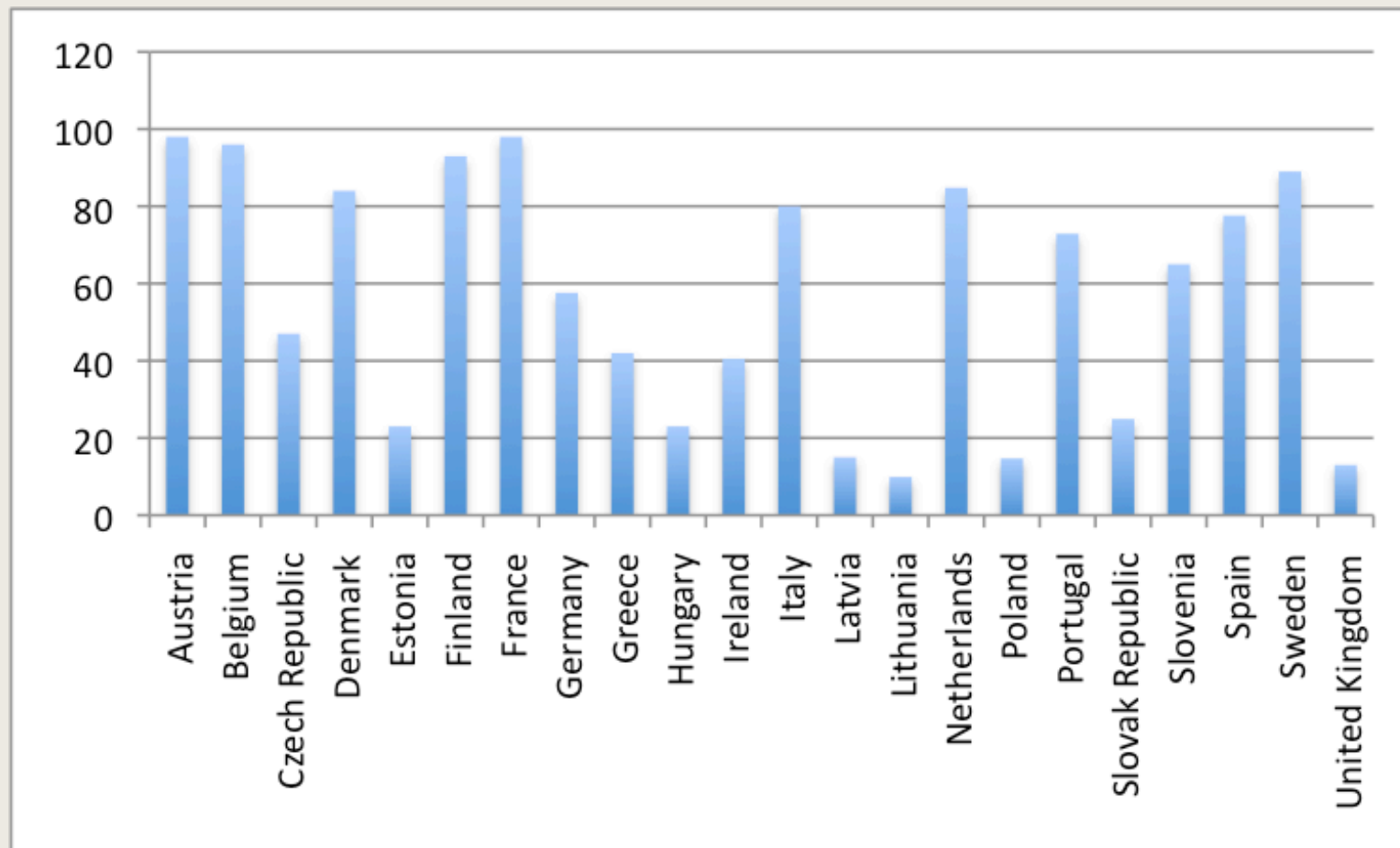


Source: Eurostat

IR INSTITUTIONS AND PRECARIOUS WORK

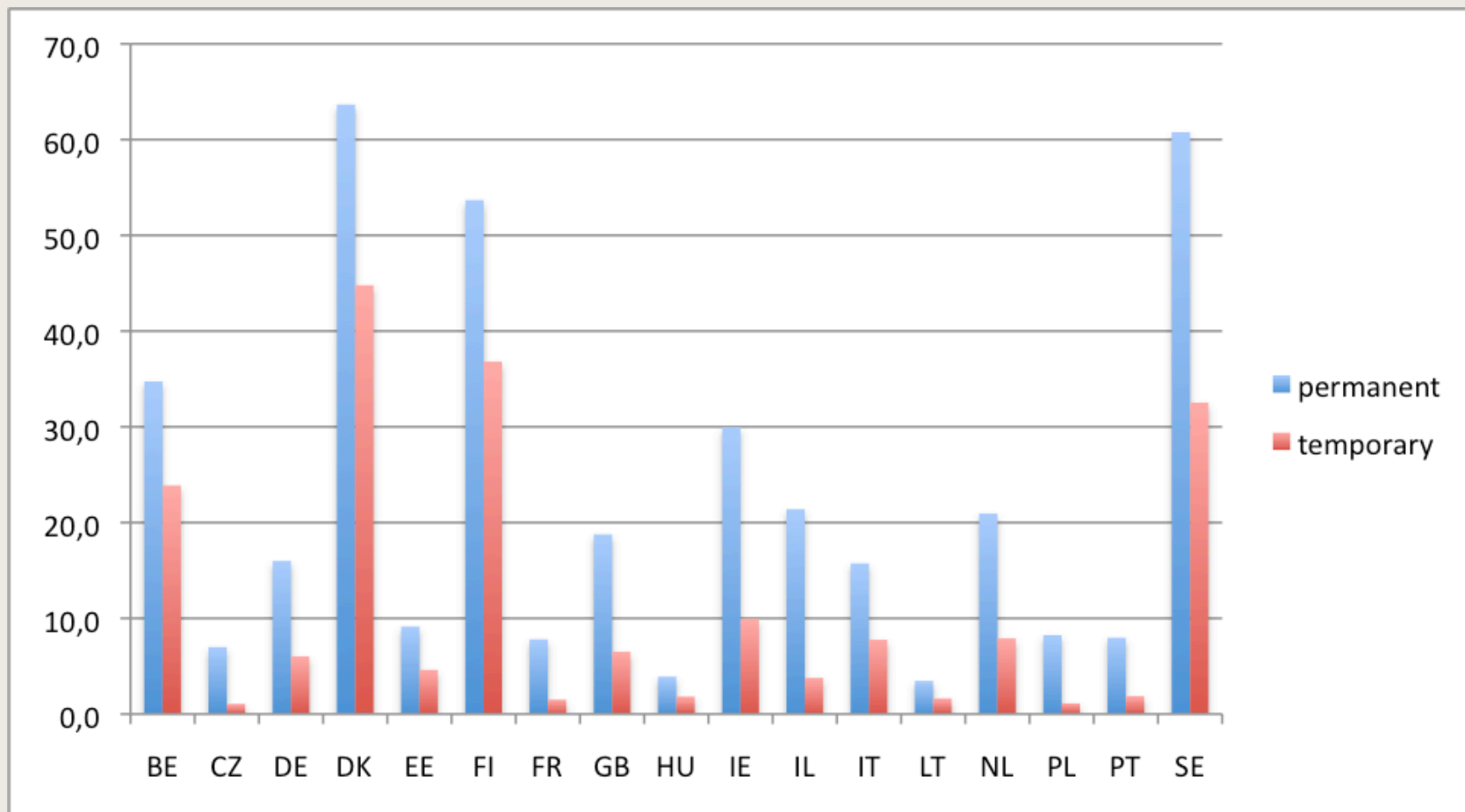
- Encompassing collective bargaining institutions (e.g. Scandinavian countries, Belgium, France, Italy)
 - High minimum wage (e.g. France, Belgium)
 - High union density
- limit work casualization and low pay

COLLECTIVE BARGAINING



Source: OECD

UNION DENSITY OF TEMPORARY AND PERMANENT WORKERS



Source: European Social Survey

INSTITUTIONAL LOOPHOLES (I)

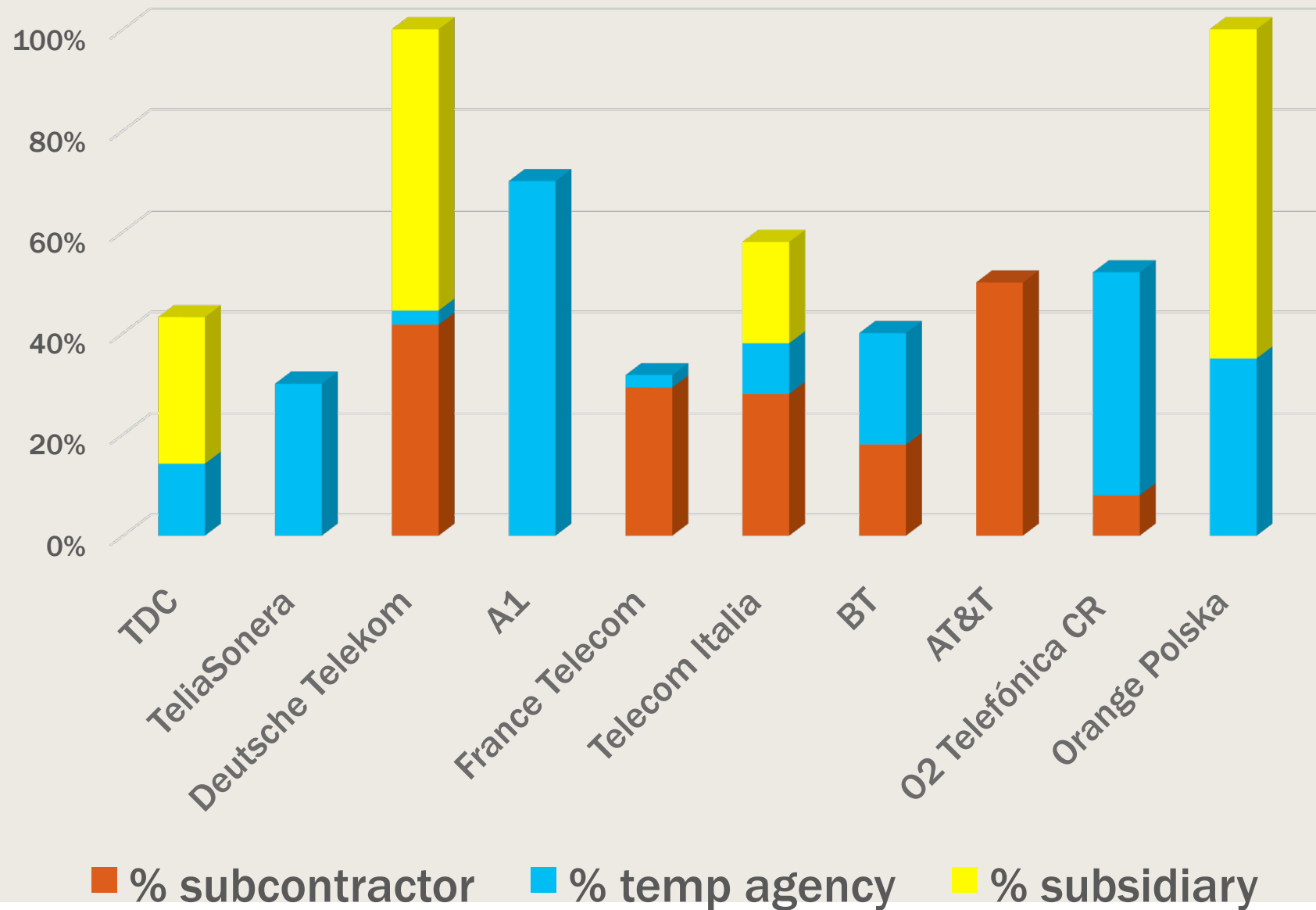
- Gaps in the regulation and/or lacking enforcement mechanisms
- Loopholes are sometimes due to the “creative” implementation of EU Directives
 - TUPE in Germany
 - Equal pay for agency workers in Germany and in UK

INSTITUTIONAL LOOPHOLES (II)

- Companies exploit loopholes in order to avoid existing regulation and collective agreements and to reduce labour
 - Role of loopholes is crucial in processes of employment restructuring as employers can segment wages and working conditions along the value chain
- creation of a growing precarious workforce at the labour market “periphery” (e.g. low-end services, subcontractors, suppliers)

% call center jobs outsourced, 2010-12

Source: Doellgast et al. 2013



IMPLICATIONS FOR UNIONS AND POLICY-MAKING

- Close the loopholes
 - make exit harder through collective agreements and public procurement policies
 - legislative interventions supported by union campaigns
- Extend existing collective agreements to new workforce segments and establish new ones
 - Organise precarious workers
 - Use power of the organized 'core' to represent the periphery
 - Extension mechanisms (e.g. France)

FURTHER REFERENCES

- Doellgast, V., Sarmiento-Mirwaldt, K. and Benassi, C. (2013):
- <http://www.academia.edu/4498267/>
[Alternative_routes_to_good_jobs_in_the_service_economy_Em
ployment_restructuring_and_human_resource_management_i
n_incumbent_telecommunications_firms](#)