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Abstract title: "The development of the model of organizing across the Finnish-Estonian border"

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## The development of the model of organizing across the Finnish-Estonian border

European integration has resulted in the growing interdependence of European labour markets. Migration flows, particularly East-West ones, have increased, and where geography permits there are increasing numbers of temporal workers and cross border commuters. Finland and Estonia represent one example of a regional transnationally linked labour market, where there is almost union-free zone just south of Finland, in which developments in one country have an immediate, substantial and visible impact in the other. In this paper we will focus on the private service sector unions in both Estonia and Finland, through analyzing their attempts to increase their membership levels both independently and through co-operating with each other.

In Finland private services workers are organized under Finnish Service Union United (*Palvelualojen ammattiliitto, PAM*). Most of the unions' members with foreign background come from Estonia and other former Soviet Union countries. They work mostly in the cleaning services and as shop assistants (PAM 2009). Union density in Finland is quite high in general but cleaning sector makes an exception. According to PAM the density was 55% in 2013 and the density of migrant workers seems to be even lower, around 28% in 2010 (Alho 2012). In Estonia workers in the private services sector are united under Estonian Trade Union of Commercial and Servicing Employees (*Eesti teenindus- ja kaubandustöötajate ametiühing, ETKA*). However, the sector has very low trade union density - under 2% in 2013 (BOA 2014) - remaining even lower than the average trade union density in Estonia, which is around 8% (Visser 2013). As migration from Estonia to Finland has become a frequent phenomenon and a big proportion of women migrating to Finland, are going to work in a cleaning sector in Finland, the low union density in Estonia presents a problem also for Finnish trade unions, especially for PAM. For example, Estonians might be reluctant to join unions also in Finland as they do not have previous experiences of belonging to them, non-unionized workers, again, might be more prone to engage with social dumping.

In this paper we will compare the strategies of the two unions - PAM and ETKA - in engaging with and representing Estonian workers, the former union mostly in Finland and the latter in Estonia. We examine these strategies through the eyes of workers and trade union officials and activists using interviews conducted in 2013-2014. Preliminary findings indicate that while PAM is basing their strategy mostly on servicing and relying on established trade union structures, ETKA has chosen an organizing approach, namely ETKA joined Baltic Organizing Academy (BOA). In addition, there is a co-operation between the unions, as PAM finances the activities of BOA. Through analyzing the co-operation we will also shed light to some of the possibilities and obstacles for transnational trade union action.