

**West-East European Labor Transnationalism(s):
Rivalry or Joint Mobilization?**

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ABSTRACT: This paper explores possibilities and limits of transnational cooperation between Western and Central-Eastern European (CEE) trade unions. Specifically, it examines two instances of cross-border union activism in the enlarged EU: a common mobilization against the EU draft services Directive, and plant-level union exchanges at GM/ Opel. The positions of trade unions from new and old EU member states coincided on the Directive issue, but often diverged in the latter case, even though the organizing effort was much higher at GM/Opel than during the anti-Directive campaign. The paper accounts for the observed variety by evaluating differences in workers' exposure to competitive pressure in the two cases. It argues that intra-firm benchmarking and the resulting direct competition between national workforces within multinational companies (MNCs) makes cross-border union coordination at the plant level much more difficult to initiate and sustain than one-shot transnational campaigns on general political economic issues.