

ILERA European Congress 2019

Veranstalter International Labour and Employment Relations Association

Veranstaltungsort Düsseldorf

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Perspectives of Employment Relations in Europe

Stable labour relations and welfare state protections have been perceived to be at the core of what has been named the European social model. Beginning in the 1990s, however, their foundations seem to have been weakened in many countries: We witness a decline in bargaining coverage, employer and union densities but also many efforts to restructure the welfare state as well as systems of labour market regulation. The 12th ILERA European Congress comes at a time when changes of institutions, actors and practices of labour relations are widespread. We expect recent current events such as the digitalisation of the economy, intensified conflict on trade, the exit of the United Kingdom from the EU as well as the vastly changing political landscape which comes along with the rise of right-wing populist parties to influence such changes in various ways. For good or bad, industrial relations will not remain the same.

Track 1: Social Europe: Equality and Poverty

The idea of Social Europe is widely associated with strong labour market institutions and employment relations which largely contribute to comparatively high levels of social protection and low inequality. Trust in European institutions and the commitment to build a better future are not necessarily taken for granted as the rise of populist parties in many European countries seems to challenge the European idea. In addition, during recent decades Europe has been faced by growing social and economic disparities both within and between regions and states but also by persistent gaps between sexes as well as between migrant and native workers. Although the reasons for growing inequalities are complex and manifold, changes in labour market institutions and the power relations of the social partners are widely regarded as one major cause for this development.

Therefore, Track 1 will tackle the following issues:

- Influence of labour market institutions and employment relations on the different dimensions of inequality (income, wealth, training and employment opportunities etc.)
- The impact of non-standard employment and precarious work
- Contributions of social partners to a reduction of inequality and to a more inclusive economic development
- Employment relations and macroeconomic performance
- New forms and concepts of labour market regulation and employment relations at European level
- EU economic governance and industrial relation
- Mobility of labour in Europe
- Contentious politics in Europe: protest, opposition, and mobilisation

Track 2: Regulation of Labour: Actors, Institutions and Law

The regulation of labour is a dynamic process subject to power relations in public policies and collective bargaining. This track aims at gathering contributions on the policies, the practice and enforcement of labour legislation and collective agreements.

The past decade has seen a growing impact of the supranational level as European policies have aimed at influencing labour and employment policies in the member states. Simultaneously, at member state level, nationalist political parties with divergent policies on labour institutions but similar opposition to foreign workers have grown. This happens against the background of a declining membership strength of trade unions and employer organisations, policies promoting a decentralisation of collective bargaining and opposition to the IR system by digital multinationals.

The presentations will deal with following issues:

- The relationship between law and other forms of regulation and between “soft” and “hard” law
- Conflicts caused by the relationship between national and supra-national labour law
- Enforcement of labour regulation – enforcing institutions and actors; strategies for transnational enforcement of labour rights
- The role of courts and tribunals as actors in labour relations
- Development of actors, trade unions and employer organisations, at national and EU level
- Transnational regulation of labour relations and the regulation of cross-border mobility

- Nationalist party policies and the regulation of labour
- Regulation of the digital economy and the role of digital multinationals

Track 3: Workers' Voice and Industrial Democracy

Europe is the origin of a rich variety of different concepts of industrial and workplace democracy. For decades the incompatibility of these traditions was more an obstacle than a fertile ground for a strong European representation of workers' voice. Meanwhile considerable progress has been made regarding workers' participation in Europe as well as beyond. Yet democracy is threatened at different levels and from different sides, in particular by the rise of authoritarian political movements and new forms of racism, sexism, classism and religious fundamentalism that also affect workplace relations. At the same time new technologies lead to new challenges as well as opportunities for democratic participation. Against this background we want to discuss the future of democratic participation at local, national, European and international levels.

Therefore, Track 3 will tackle the following issues:

- Concepts and traditions: industrial democracy, industrial citizenship, "autogestion", "Mitbestimmung" (co-determination) and beyond
- Debate about European minimum standards for board-level employee representation
- Workers' voice in transnational companies: European works councils, employee involvement in European Companies (SE), International Framework Agreements
- Union busting in international comparison
- Voluntary forms of employee participation
- Direct and representative participation
- Economic outcomes of workers' participation
- Fragmentation of the workforce as a challenge for democratic participation
- New solidarities and new forms of participation
- Gender and diversity in labour unions and works councils

Track 4: Human Resources, Quality of Work and Digitalisation

HRM is a continuously changing practice - not only in the firm, but also in inter-organisational relations between firms or between firms and (self-employed) individuals. As a consequence, we experience a massive change in practices of HRM, in the respective constellations of actors in HRM and employment relations. A growing digitalisation of (multinational) firms as well as their business relationships, new business models based on digital technologies (e.g., crowdwork) leading to a "Gig economy" and the use of artificial intelligence impacts on the quality of work, HRM practices and employment relations.

Under this track, we will tackle theoretical as well as comparative issues on, for example:

- HRM, quality of work and working conditions
- Consequences of digitalisation for HRM policy fields and employment relations
- New developments in HRM, for example talent analytics or automatic decision making
- New practices in the policy fields of HRM in and beyond the single firm
- Intermediated work
- HRM for highly-skilled workers and low-skilled workers

Registration for the Congress will start on **31 January 2019**

More information ([link](#)).
