Contribution ID: **1** Type: **not specified**

Pushing and pulling towards European wage policies: the Governance of wages and the interaction of different Dimensions and forces

Thursday, 16 September 2021 14:15 (30 minutes)

This paper investigates how wages can be governed in the EU and what the role and effects of different dimensions of industrial relations systems are. More specifically, we investigate the 'vertical dimension', which connects the supranational locus of European policy-making and shaping to national organizations in a top-down fashion. We also investigate the role of the 'horizontal dimension', which directly connects national organizations'goals and understandings to those of their counterparts in other countries in an emergent fashion. This connection could be either formal, i.e. visible, or informal and invisible. The latter includes orientation towards or imitation of behaviour of others. In the paper we argue that both dimensions interact with each other and are important in order to understand the functioning of wage-setting in the EU and the interaction between both institutions could allow a transnational governance, i.e. a European governance, of wages. In order to address the research question the paper derives a theoretical concept of social partnership and state actors'motives and rationales on the basis of (neo-)corporatist theory which is integrated into comparative political economy literature on differences in industrial relations systems and varieties of capitalism. Empirically, we are making use of a mixed method strategy based on a unique data set from a standardized questionnaire surveys sent out to social partners'organizations in all member states of the EU and on information based on semi-structured interviews of social partners'organizations in five countries.

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Session Classification: 1.3

Track Classification: Track 3