

‘Global Labour Market Actors’ Discourses and Policies on Migration’

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International migration is a quintessentially a global issue, as well as a European one, which has become a highly divisive source of conflict at national, European and global levels, as well as a rallying cry for social movements and parties of the extreme right. At the national level, migrant and labour market regimes are constantly being adapted to the challenges associated with demographic change, economic crisis-induced labour market constraints, political forces and European and global labour market regulation. While much attention has been paid to the views and discourses of different actors at the national level, there is less attention to the discourses and policies of European and international industrial relations actors, and how they shape and are shaped by national-level discourses and policies.

This paper investigates global social and labour market policies and discourses on migration, particularly migrants in the labour market. It will explore how they have been influenced by and sought to find a common position out of the conflicting views of national actors, whether governments, trade unions or other actors. It also seeks to understand the patterns of these global discourses and discuss them in relation to the dominant political discourses at the national and international levels. European and global industrial relations actors are linked by networks of knowledge, policies and ideas. They shape global perceptions, diagnoses and solutions to social problems, and provide policy prescriptions to world-regional, national and sub-national policy levels. This paper will pay special attention to the inter-relations between the national, European and global levels, and examine how they affect one another, to produce a common discourse, or alternatively to develop distinct discourses and policies.

The paper will look at the International Labour Organisation (ILO), the European Union (EU), the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) and the European Trade Union Confederation. As there has been a great deal of attention already to the EU, the main focus will be on the leading trade union actors, the ITUC and ETUC.

The paper draws on work we carried out together in the course of the research project ‘In Search of the Global Labour Market’ project at the Zentrum für Interdisziplinäre Forschung (ZiF), University of Bielefeld, 2017 –9.

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