IREC / IWPLMS 2026

Joint IREC and IWPLMS Conferences

Book of Abstracts

Parallel Sessions v.15.09.26

Oslo, 16–18 September 2026

Venue: Fafo, Borggata 2B, Oslo

Parallel Session I

Wednesday 16 September 15:30 - 17:30

A1 Collective bargaining coverage and the EU Minimum Wage Directive

15:30 - 17:30 · Room: Auditoriet · Chair: Kurt Vandeale

Lessons from the past: reform trajectories and institutional pathways to collective bargaining coverage in Europe

Dr Valentina Paolucci[1], Professor William K Roche[2], Professor Guglielmo Meardi[3], Dr Vincenzo Maccarrone[3], Dr Darragh Golden[2]

[1]Maynooth School of Business, Maynooth, Ireland. [2]UCD College of Business, Dublin, Ireland. [3]Scuola Normale Superiore, Firenze, Italy

Collective bargaining has returned to the centre of European labour market policy, most notably through the EU Directive on Adequate Minimum Wages, which requires Member States with collective bargaining coverage below 80 per cent to develop national action plans to promote collective bargaining. Against this backdrop, this paper presents a comparative analysis of reforms and initiatives that have affected collective bargaining coverage across 27 EU Member States since 2010.

Drawing on a systematic review of policy-oriented (e.g. Eurofound 2015, 2024; ILO 2017, 2022; OECD 2019, 2025) and comparative industrial relations (IR) literature (e.g. De Spiegelaere, 2025; Keune, 2021; Brandl, 2022; Schreurs, 2025), the paper maps the trajectory of initiatives that have either promoted or weakened collective bargaining coverage across Europe. It examines changes in the institutional conditions governing bargaining articulation, extension mechanisms, representativeness rules, decentralisation processes, and state-led or social partner-led support measures.

The analysis emphasises the sequencing and interaction of these initiatives over time, developing an analytical framework to classify national experiences and identify recurring patterns across different IR systems. This comparative mapping is complemented by in-depth qualitative case studies in six countries (Ireland, Italy, Germany, France, Poland, and Spain), where data collection enables a contextualised understanding of how specific collective bargaining reforms and initiatives operate within particular institutional settings.

The paper makes three intertwined contributions. First, by systematically mapping initiatives impacting collective bargaining coverage over time, the study enables reforms to be examined in relation to their expected effects across different institutional configurations. Second, preliminary findings suggest that higher coverage is most consistently associated with multi-employer bargaining, the form and degree of bargaining coordination, the existence of extension mechanisms, and high levels of employer organisation density. These findings inform a refined classification of countries based not only on static institutional features, but on the trajectories of reforms and their observed coverage patterns. Third, the study provides research-informed guidance to support policymakers and social partners in identifying the types of actions and institutional conditions required to implement Article 4 of the EU Directive on Adequate Minimum Wages across EU countries.

The European Minimum Wage Directive and the National Action Plans to promote collective bargaining

Torsten Müller[1], Thorsten Schulten[2]

[1]European Trade Union Institute - ETUI, Brussels, Belgium. [2]Institute of Economic and Social Research - WSI, Düsseldorf, Germany

The overarching aim of this article is to analyse the content and (potential) impact of national action plans to promote collective bargaining. It is well hidden in its name, but the key objective of the European Directive on Adequate Minimum Wages in the EU is not only to ensure minimum wages that enable workers to make a decent living, but also to strengthen collective bargaining. Actually, one of the few mandatory provisions in the Directive requires Member States with a collective bargaining coverage below 80% to establish an action plan to promote collective bargaining and to submit it to the European Commission by 31 December 2025. According to the most recent OECD-AIAS ICTWSS database figures, only nine countries currently meet this 80% threshold, meaning that 18 countries need to establish such an action plan.

At the time of writing this abstract at the beginning of March 2026, only 11 countries have already submitted their action plan to the Commission. However, by September 2026 all 18 countries should have established their action plan. Against this background, this article pursues four objectives: (1) taking stock of and categorizing the content of the 18 national action plans; (2) assessing the potential of the action plans to realise the Directive's objective of gradually increasing collective bargaining coverage in the respective countries; (3) analysing the process of establishing the action plans and the degree of union involvement; (4) contextualising the empirical findings within the broader political and academic debate about the prerequisites for strengthening collective bargaining in different company-level and sectoral bargaining systems.

The analysis will be based on regular 'mapping reports' prepared by the ETUI's network of 27 national experts, who have been tasked with continuously monitoring the transposition process of the Minimum Wage Directive. The analysis will also include the nine countries that are not formally required to establish an action plan because, in some countries, trade unions have already taken the initiative to start discussions about 'voluntary' action plans. By combining an in-depth empirical analysis of developments in all EU Member States with a conceptual discussion about the current state of collective bargaining in the EU, this analysis aims to further the debate on strategies for strengthening collective bargaining.

Strengthening collective bargaining in Germany: Proposals to increase the bargaining coverage

Prof. Gerhard W. Bosch

Institute Work, skills and training, University Duisburg-Essen, Duisburg, Germany

Collective bargaining coverage in Germany has declined from around 85% in 1990 to 49% in 2025. I will present the results of an interdisciplinary research project that examines the reasons for and consequences of the erosion of the German collective bargaining. and makes proposals for increasing bargaining.

The decline in bargaining coverage is the main cause of the weakening of middle incomes and the sharp increase in low-paid work. The adjusted collective bargaining premium in Germany is around 10%. Collective agreements with their differentiated wage scales ensure that qualifications and responsibility are adequately remunerated. In addition there are many qualitative advantages, such as working time options or entitlements to further training and employment protection, which are becoming increasingly important in the transformation. Our macroeconomic simulation shows slightly positive employment effects with a gradual increase in bargaining coverage over 5 years.

Due to the fragmentation of companies with long chains of subcontractors, which have weakened trade unions and employers' associations, a return to the old voluntary system with high bargaining coverage and low state support is not a realistic option. We therefore propose a package of measures that combines strengthening the bargaining parties from below with government support from above. In doing so, we draw on German experience as well as good international examples.

The measures from "below" aim to strengthen the bargaining parties. Union density in Germany has now fallen to just 14%. The organizational weakness is also a consequence of the high number of free riders who benefit from collective agreements without paying dues. German unions are experimenting with so-called benefit regulations, which ensure that certain negotiation outcomes (such as additional vacation days) only benefit union members. Following the example of Canada or Switzerland, we propose a solidarity fee for all employees who are paid according to collective agreements. Another proposal is a strict duty of neutrality for companies in works council elections to combat trade union and works council busting. Employers' associations have weakened their ability to commit by creating membership without collective bargaining agreements, which should be prohibited by law.

The measures from "above" include facilitating the declaration of general applicability, laws on compliance with collective agreements in public procurement at national, regional, and local level, and making it more difficult to evade collective agreements when leaving the collective agreement or selling parts of the business.

Can social clauses in public procurement strengthen collective bargaining? A comparison of four European countries

Dr. Lorraine Ryan, Dr. Juliet McMahon, Dr. Jonathan Lavelle

University of Limerick, Limerick, Ireland

Despite European governments advocating employment rights and worker voice, many workers have had contradictory experiences whilst engaged in government commissioned work. There have been numerous cases across Europe highlighting substandard working conditions and breaches of workers' rights in government funded projects (Cremers, 2014). Historically, the priority of the EU in cases of public procurement was dominated by market considerations with a distinct absence of social considerations in assessment of public tenders. However, since 2014, regulation on public procurement has explicitly included social issues, including employment standards, as viable considerations in awarding of public contracts.

Such clauses make it mandatory for contracting authorities to enforce applicable labour and social laws and collective agreements in their procurement activities. Contracting authorities may also exclude an economic operator from a public procurement procedure where they can demonstrate that the operator has violated applicable social or labour obligations. However, the European Commission has acknowledged the lack of data on the implementation of the social clause across Member States (European Commission, 2020).

Since then, the EU Directive on Adequate Minimum Wages in 2022 has drawn renewed attention to the need to strengthen collective bargaining, particularly in countries where coverage is low. Member States must develop national action plans to promote collective bargaining, potentially including through public procurement rules. Furthermore, a recent ruling from The Court of Justice of the EU (involving home helps in Spain) has determined that tendering for a public contract can favour employers who will collectively bargain on workers' wages under the contract, thus further underpinning the importance of collective bargaining (Prendergast, 2026). This increased impetus from the EU to return collective bargaining to the centre of European labour market policy offers potential for improving workers' terms and conditions of employment through public procurement.

In this paper we examine the regulatory environment of public procurement across four European countries – Ireland, the UK, Germany and the Netherlands. Drawing on a systematic review of policy-oriented sources and industrial relations literature we compare national regulations and map the initiatives, or planned initiatives from national action plans to enhance collective bargaining in public procurement. Our findings point to ambiguity within the current EU procurement framework as a barrier to strengthening social clauses and the continued significance of national institutions. Our comparative analysis offers policy insights to help ensure public contracts can contribute to decent work by giving preference to companies which respect workers' right to collective bargaining.

Raising the wage floor in the UK, US and Germany: A power resources paradox

Dr Mathew Johnson[1], Prof Damian Grimshaw[2]

[1]University of Manchester, Manchester, United Kingdom. [2]King\'s Business School, London, United Kingdom

Recent decades have seen a significant expansion of statutory minimum wages across countries which has delivered significant real and relative increases for workers paid at, and just above, the minimum wage (ILO, 2025). Statutory minimum wages are an effective floor under wages for, often ununionized, workers and can provide an important platform for collective bargaining to improve wages across low paying industries such as retail, hospitality and care (Grimshaw et al., 2014) Minimum wages can also be supplemented with localised or sector-specific minimum and living wages, often using public procurement to extend coverage to sub-contracted workers (Johnson et al., 2021). These broadly redistributive wage settlements have come with relatively few of the job displacement effects predicted by neoclassical economists, and the role of minimum wages in protecting vulnerable workers is increasingly accepted by policy makers, trade unions and business actors (ILO, 2025).

How then to explain the paradox that such wage gains have been achieved for low paid workers with limited bargaining power? Comparative research suggests that it is not productivity gains or market forces that have driven up wages at the bottom, and there is limited evidence that workers have leveraged their collective power directly to push for higher minimum wages (Kollmeyer, 2017). And while trade unions are increasingly favourable towards minimum wages, it is often political actors that have championed minimum and living wages (Grimshaw and Johnson, 2024).

Drawing on power resource theory (PRT) we compare redistributive wage bargaining in low wage labour markets in the UK, US and Germany. Despite significant differences in the historical development of minimum wages across these three countries, it is the notable lack of structural and associational power of low paid workers that has prompted state intervention (at different levels) to shore up wages near the bottom. At the same time, we observe the importance of ideational power in building public support for living wages, reflecting the view that someone working full-time should not live in poverty. There are also diverse coalitional power resources (including politicians, trade unions, civil society actors and employers) that have strengthened the visibility and legitimacy of low wage campaigns. We argue that to prevent the reversal and fragmentation of redistributive wage settlements, it is crucial to leverage institutional power through regular upratings, tripartite decision-making, coordination with other economic and labour market policy interventions, and an expansive role for public procurement.

Wage coordination in practice – local bargaining dynamics in the Norwegian manufacturing sector.

Balder Blinkenberg, Kristine Nergaard and Kristin Alsos

Within different strands of comparative political economy as well as industrial relations research, the ability of the social partners to coordinate the pace of wage increases is generally seen as a strength for the collective bargaining regime. Functionally, wage coordination affords the central partners in open economies a way to overcome the collective action-problem wherein all firms benefit from sector-wide competitive labour costs (Hall & Soskice, 2001). Coordinated market economies provides the peak organizations the ability to ensure stable wage growth for different groups in the labour market, while shielding the export-oriented sectors from excessive wage increases that would damage their international competitiveness (Baccaro & Pontusson, 2016).

In this stylized view of coordinated market economies, wage bargaining at the workplace level is often overlooked. This is despite a growing tendency of derogation from the central/sectoral to the local level within countries that rely on wage coordination, in a process referred to as “organized decentralization”(Ibsen et al., 2018). Two-tiered bargaining systems necessarily contain a tension between the higher-level need for wage coordination and the lower-level desire for real, substantive wage negotiations.

In this paper, we explore local wage bargaining dynamics in a Nordic pattern bargaining context. Based on interviews conducted with negotiating parties in 21 workplaces in the Norwegian manufacturing sector, we examine the effect of the central partners’ wage growth estimate on the local wage negotiations. We find that the “framework” estimate from the central partners play a significant role, and can, depending on the economic performance of the firm, be employed strategically by both parties as a reference point. Our analysis thus sheds light on the mechanisms underpinning wage coordination in two-tiered bargaining systems.

B4 OSH, work environment and enforcement

15:30 - 17:30 · Room: Nord · Chair: Stine Rasmussen

The capability of European OSH institutions in protecting interactive service workers

Prof. Dr. Barbara Bechter[1], Prof. Dr. Nadja Doerflinger[2]

[1]Durham Business School, Durham, United Kingdom. [2]TU Dortmund University, Dortmund, Germany

A safe and healthy working environment is a fundamental right at work (ILO, 2022). The Covid-19 pandemic, however, highlighted the manifold risks service workers at the frontline face. Contemporary labour markets are increasingly organised around service-intensive forms of production in occupations where work is structured around sustained interaction with clients, customers, patients, or other service recipients. In these settings, the interaction itself constitutes a core component of the labour process where workers are required to manage the expectations, emotions, and behaviour of non-employees who participate in the production of the service.

Despite the expansion of this form of work, the institutional systems designed to protect worker health and safety remain largely structured around hazards associated with manufacturing and other forms of industrial production, including risks located within bounded workplaces under direct employer control. This article examines the resulting protection gap in interactive service work. The analytically significant question is why institutional systems of worker protection appear to address these risks unevenly, even within regulatory systems that are formally well developed.

The argument is that these gaps are best understood as a case of institutional inadequacy, and a structural misalignment between the institutional structure of occupational safety regulation and the risk profile associated with interactive service work. To examine this problem, the analysis is based on OSH frameworks developed by Fulton (2018), who uses four broad models in Europe that capture variation in how OSH systems organise regulatory authority, workplace representation, and enforcement mechanisms. Empirically, our work is grounded in the 2024 ESENER survey data.

The perspective taken by our paper contributes to ongoing debates in industrial relations and policy research concerning institutional adaptation in changing labour markets. While literature on interactive service work has focused on labour process dynamics, less attention has been paid to the question how institutions shape the governance of the risks emerging from these labour processes. This article aims to fill this gap by situating the risks characterising interactive service work within the institutional architecture of occupational safety governance by integrating labour process and institutional theory.

* Please note: We would like to organise a dedicated conference session on IR and issues related to health, safety and well-being.

Contested futures of workplace wellbeing: labour process and institutional work in the European psychosocial risk directive debate

Ms Zuzanna Kowalik

Institute for Structural Research, Warsaw, Poland. University of Warsaw, Warsaw, Poland

Twenty years after the European social partners' framework agreement on work-related stress, implementation at the national level remains highly uneven across EU member states, and no binding EU directive on psychosocial risks (PSR) has been adopted. This is striking given the growing recognition that work-related stress, burnout, anxiety and other psychosocial harms are closely linked to the ongoing labour process transformation in increasingly digitalised and intensified labour markets. The paper asks: why has hard-law regulation of psychosocial risks at EU level not emerged, despite mounting evidence of harm and long-standing calls for stronger employer responsibility? More broadly, it examines how competing actors define psychosocial risks, attribute responsibility for them, and shape the regulatory boundaries of job quality in contemporary Europe.

The paper combines institutional work theory (Lawrence and Suddaby, 2006) with insights from labour process theory. This makes it possible to analyse psychosocial risk regulation as a struggle over the governance of changing working conditions. The analysis therefore links regulatory debates to broader questions of managerial control, employer prerogative, and the institutional conditions under which new dimensions of job quality become governable.Therefore, the presentation is being submitted to Stream 3: Job quality, working conditions and labour market mobility in a changing world of work.

Empirically, the paper draws on 17 qualitative expert interviews with representatives of trade unions, employer organisations, and EU-level regulatory experts. It uses a theory-informed qualitative analysis of how actors frame psychosocial risks, what evidence and arguments they mobilise, and how they justify either stronger regulation or the preservation of voluntary approaches.

The findings show that the absence of a directive is not due to a lack of evidence, but to sustained political and institutional contestation. Trade unions seek to reframe psychosocial harm as an occupational risk comparable to physical hazards and therefore subject to employer responsibility. Employers, by contrast, resist further hard-law intervention by emphasising the subjective and multifactorial nature of mental health problems, thereby shifting attention away from work organisation and limiting regulatory liability. Regulatory experts often occupy an intermediate position, supporting more structured approaches while recognising the difficulty of building consensus. The paper argues that the stalled PSR directive debate shows how changing labour processes generate new harms, while institutional arrangements shape whether these harms are recognised as collective, regulable job quality issues.

Between Rising Expectations and Limited Capacity: Labour Inspectorates and the Changing Institutional Landscape

Giulia La Rocca, Swantje Robelski

Bundesanstalt für Arbeitsschutz und Arbeitsmedizin (BAuA), Berlin, Germany

Labour inspectorates are key state actors in enforcing labour standards operating across diverse workplaces and sectors. At the same time, they are confronted with an evolving institutional environment shaped by labour market fragmentation, the growth of precarious employment and mounting demands for transparency, efficiency and quantifiable impact. These developments raise important questions about how regulatory institutions adapt to new expectations, and the implications for their capacity to address evolving challenges in labour market regulation.

This paper examines how labour inspectorates in Germany and Austria respond to these changing demands, and the impact of these responses on everyday regulatory practices. Drawing on qualitative interview data from 35 individuals at strategic and operational levels, the analysis focuses on how new expectations, such as digitalisation, accelerated communication and increased public accountability, are interpreted and translated into organisational practices.

Preliminary findings suggest that inspectorates are under pressure from multiple, and sometimes conflicting, sources. They are expected to modernise and adopt digital tools while demonstrating effectiveness through measurable outcomes and more uniform practices. However, they continue to operate within established legal and organisational frameworks and under resource constraints. Consequently, organisational responses are often characterised by incremental adjustments rather than fundamental transformation. Initial findings also suggest that digital technologies do not automatically lead to greater efficiency. Instead, limitations in technological infrastructure and insufficient support for implementation processes tend to increase communication demands and documentation requirements, and contribute to growing time pressure in daily work.

These developments have important implications for the role of labour inspectorates within the broader system of labour market regulation. As inspectorates are required to prioritise activities and respond more reactively under pressure, enforcement practices may need to be more selective. This highlights challenges in balancing demands across sectors, establishments, and organisational contexts, particularly under conditions of labour market fragmentation and resource constraints.

This paper contributes to debates in industrial relations by highlighting how state-based regulatory institutions are being reshaped in response to changing expectations and constraints. It demonstrates that current transformations are driven not only by formal policy changes, but also by shifts in institutional pressures and organisational practices, which could ultimately affect labour inspectorates' capacity to effectively perform their regulatory role.

Enforcing work-environment clauses in public procurement contracts: the essential missing link

Chris Mathieu[1], Ninni Norlinder[2]

[1]Department of Sociology, Lund University, Lund, Sweden. [2]Unit of Occupational Medicine, Karolinska institutet, Stockholm, Sweden

There is a recent upsurge of interest in how public procurement can play a progressive role in improving working conditions (Jaehrling 2025; Jaehrling et al. 2018; Arnholtz et al 2025). While clauses demanding enhanced employment quality – i.e. wages, holiday pay, pensions, etc., – are more frequent and traceable through state tax authorities or accounting audits, work-environment (physical and psycho-social) demands and clauses are less common and trickier to formulate and enforce. This is because work-environment clauses require branch-specific work environment knowledge, sometimes even object or location-specific knowledge for both formulating appropriately effective clauses and enforcement procedures. While work-environment clauses are occasionally included in public procurement contracts, our research shows that these are rarely followed up and enforced.

We pose two research questions: What are the barriers to formulation and enforcement of work-environment clauses in public procurement contracts? What are the detrimental effects of non-enforcement and the (largely non-realised) beneficial effects of enforcement? These questions are answered based on a 2025-2026 Swedish interview-based study with a broad range of actors involved in public procurement processes (primarily focused on the municipal level). Eighteen interviews (with 23 unique individuals, some interviews involved 2-3 informants) were carried out with actors including procuring municipalities, trade unions, branch organisations for firms bidding for tenders, work environment authorities, occupational health services, and procurement regulating authorities.

Our results show that the requisite knowledge to formulate and enforce work-environment demands is found among service providers, branch organisations, employees and trade unions, but this knowledge is not found among the contracting politicians, procurement officials and enforcement officers. This knowledge gap means that formulating and enforcing clauses either does not take place or is inadequate. Furthermore, non-enforcement of clauses written into contracts, or the formulation of clauses deemed unenforceable allows some actors to submit lower tenders based on the assumption that they will not be enforced, thereby winning contracts. This undermines the entire intended system for work-environment clauses.

The study contributes primarily to empirically understanding the barriers to developing and enforcing work-environment clauses in public procurement contracting and the risks entailed with non-enforcement. Theoretically, the study contributes to the interdisciplinary study of occupational health and safety as a job quality phenomenon (Albin et al 2024), the emerging field of social determinants of occupational health (Montano 2020; Theorell 2020) and provides evidence for justifying "insourcing" or recovering service provision into public sector service-provider organisations (Devetter, et al 2025).

When strong institutions and inclusive trade unions strategies are insufficient

associate professor Lise Lotte Hansen

Department of Social Sciences and Business, Roskilde University, Roskilde, Denmark

Inequality, insecurity and exploitation are on the rise, also among workers covered by collective agreements. This becomes evident when you look at the daily work and workplaces where agreements, workers voice and workplace collectives are undermined by outsourcing, changed employer strategies, a very high working speed, insecure working conditions, and trade union hostile actions, and this despite labour market regulation, institutions, and collective agreements – seemingly - being unchanged.

Building on qualitative research in solidarity among cleaners in Denmark and in their trade union, 3F, the paper discusses how interest representation and trade union strength and strategies are challenged by changes at the labour market, but also how new opportunities for resistance, collaboration and collective actions arise. It contributes to research discussions on the employment relationship in the service sector (Kirov og Ramioul 2014), trade union power resources (Keizer et al 2024), vicious and virtuous circles (Doellgast et al 2018), interest representation (Hyman 1997; Grady & Siims 2018; Holgate 2021; Ibsen & Tapia 2017), and trade union renewal (Gumbrell-McCormick & Hyman 2013; Holgate 2021) with a focus on social reproductive work and women, ethnic minority and migrant workers as well as a feminist research perspective.

The problem of work absenteeism in Spain: Myth or reality?

Elena M. Dregalinaite Kazakauskaite[1], Ph. D. Raúl Lorente Campos[2], Ph. D. Albert Navarro Gine[1]

[1]Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona - POWAH, Barcelona, Spain. [2]Universitat de València - Departament de Sociologia - IILP, Valencia, Spain

The right of workers to recover and heal when they are ill, through sick leave that interrupts their work during that period of recovery, is a labour right widely established in most countries for over a century. It has been progressively incorporated into labour law and social security systems present in virtually all countries and has its origins in the Bismarckian system and Beveridge model at the end of XIX century and first period of XX respectively. Both policy origins combine and encompass the practices of corporate paternalism, which already recognized the increases in labour productivity resulting from providing medical care to sick workers, and the drive to achieve labour rights promoted by the organized labour movement.

However, in recent times, this pillar of the welfare state and the minimum working conditions enjoyed by wage earners has been eroded and challenged to a greater or lesser extent by the neoliberal push and by labour management policies and practices that promote flexibility and precarity.

We are witnessing a context where the business sector, through employers' associations, think tanks, and mass media, presents absenteeism as one of the most serious problems facing the productive ecosystem in Spain and as a problem that increasingly affects companies.

This article estimates the hours lost due to temporary incapacity (IT) in Spain, quantifies them in economic terms, and includes an analysis of presenteeism, the phenomenon of attending work while ill, and the resulting productivity losses and their economic impact.

Through the analysis of official secondary sources (EPA and ETCL from the INE) and a survey conducted by the authors with 1250 salaried workers, the ERP25, representative of the salaried workforce in Spain, absenteeism and presenteeism are estimated, respectively. This paper stems from the IMPROnTA project: PID2023-150644NB-I00, funded by the Spanish Ministry of Science, Innovation and Universities, of which the authors are members.

The results are presented differentiated by gender, age, occupational class and show that absenteeism due to sick leave in Spain remains at reasonable levels and that the incidence of presenteeism is high, that is, a significant part of the Spanish workforce goes to their workplace despite being ill and when they should be focusing on recovering their health through sick leave, and that this causes estimated productivity losses, as well as the practice of presenteeism is being linked to situations of greater job insecurity.

F3 Working conditions, migration and regulation

15:30 - 17:30 · Room: Sør · Chair: Sonja Bekker

Minimum Standards, Criminal Law and Access to Justice: Wage Theft in the Norwegian Model

Dr Synnøve Ø. Jahnsen
Fafo, Oslo, Norway

European debates on minimum standards increasingly centre on enforcement and national implementation. While EU labour directives establish baseline protections, responsibility for addressing labour exploitation rests with individual states, producing varied legal approaches and institutional responses. Policy frameworks also draw on overlapping concepts such as modern slavery, trafficking and forced labour, each with distinct legal and political implications. In this landscape Norway offers a distinctive case. Its coordinated model combines high collective bargaining coverage and strong social partners with public oversight, yet concerns about underpayment have fuelled a shift towards work related crime and more state centred enforcement. The criminalisation of wage theft sits within this development and may reshape how responsibility for securing minimum standards is shared between collective institutions and public authorities.

This paper examines wage theft criminalisation through an access to justice lens. It asks: How does criminalisation shape workers' practical access to justice in underpayment cases, and what incentives and barriers arise at the intersection of criminal law, labour inspection and collective institutions? It also asks: How is the new offence used in practice, and how does it interact with existing channels for wage recovery and workplace regulation?

Conceptually, the paper adopts an access to justice perspective and examines how wage theft cases are handled in practice within a coordinated industrial relations system. The focus is on how underpayment complaints are assessed and channelled across criminal, administrative and collective arenas, and how institutional criteria and practical constraints shape the handling of cases.

Empirically, the study draws on legislative preparatory works and policy documents, qualitative interviews with enforcement and support actors, and a mapping of publicly available case material. Rather than evaluating the reform's overall effectiveness, the paper provides an empirical account of how the new offence operates alongside existing mechanisms for wage recovery and workplace regulation, and what this suggests about the relationship between collective institutions and state enforcement in the Norwegian model.

Negotiating, Regulating and Organising: European Trade Unions Confronting Subcontracting, Precarity and Migrant Work in Logistics

Nicola Quondamatteo, Francesco Bagnardi, Lucia Amorosi, Camilla Macciani, Katia Pilati
University of Trento, Trento, Italy

This paper examines how European labour movements have addressed the growing presence of migrant and precarious workers in logistics since the 2008 crisis. Focusing on five countries - Denmark, the Netherlands, France, and Spain - the study draws on archival research on trade union newsletters edited by European Trade Union Institute reconstructing how unions have responded to restructuring, subcontracting, segmentation.

Logistics has become a major site of precarious employment, characterised by fragmented employer structures, temporary agency work, and multi-tier contractual arrangements. Migrant workers are disproportionately represented in these segments, often facing legal insecurity, occupational segregation, and limited access to institutional forms of representation. These developments pose significant challenges to established models of organisation and collective bargaining in Europe.

The paper develops three analytical dimensions. First, it investigates how unions mobilise different power resources - structural, associational, institutional, and societal - to organise and represent migrant and precarious workers within diverse national industrial relations systems. Second, it explores patterns of competition and cooperation among traditional, "yellow," and grassroots unions, showing how inter-union dynamics shape strategies of mobilisation and bargaining. Third, it analyses how various subcontracting arrangements constrain regulatory interventions and reshape the scope of collective representation.

By adopting a comparative perspective, the paper contributes to scholarly debates on union renewal and labour market segmentation. It argues that the representation of migrant and precarious workers has become a central terrain through which the European labour movement negotiates its organisational boundaries, solidarities, and strategic capacities in an increasingly fragmented world of work.

The Receding State: Seasonal Labour Migration and Legal Fragmentation in Post-Brexit United Kingdom

Dovelyn Rannveig Mendoza

University of Cambridge, Faculty of Law, Cambridge, United Kingdom

Since the end of the Second World War, the UK has operated a government scheme regulating the entry of seasonal workers from abroad into the agricultural sector. This paper examines the evolving regulatory framework shaping the UK's shifting labour frontier, focusing on the Seasonal Work Visa (SWV) scheme, which has been in operation since 2019. On one hand, the SWV is designed to isolate migrant workers from the local labour market and ensure they stay on farms and return home after their contracts end, while bearing a substantial share of the costs associated with their recruitment and stay. On the other hand, it aims to protect their labour rights by instituting decent pay, including a National Living Wage and guaranteed weekly income, and by closely regulating various aspects of their work and living conditions.

This paper explores how the UK state implements this dual regulatory goal of segmentation and protection, highlighting tensions within a framework aimed at protecting migrant workers and segmenting the labour market. It investigates the challenges of managing international labour recruitment and the SWV's fragmented enforcement regime at national and international levels. This fragmentation creates a vacuum of accountability in the enforcement landscape, which is filled by both state and non-state actors in various ways. These include sharing the UK's regulatory burden through quid pro quo deals with sending states, where increased migrant deployment is exchanged for the sending state assuming certain regulatory responsibilities. It also coincides with the rise of a 'private regulation industry' that polices the recruitment supply chain through voluntary compliance and non-public disclosures of results. The paper underscores the limits of regulation and the counterproductive effects of siloed, often conflicting regulatory tools that focus on one aspect of the regulatory landscape while neglecting others—such as addressing flexible labour market regulations combined with strict immigration pathways—or overlook the fundamental labour market conditions at both origin and destination.

Data collection involved an analysis of administrative records and fieldwork in the UK and eight locations across Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan, which account for 70 per cent of SWV migrants in 2024. It included over 100 hours of interviews and focus groups with state officials, recruitment agencies, including those operating in the informal sector, migrant workers, employers, academics, IOs, NGOs, and advocacy groups in all four countries.

Confronting Inequality at the Margins of the Labour Market: Roma Inclusion, Care Shortages, and Institutional Innovation in Slovakia

Lenka Hanulová, Mgr. Simona Brunnerová

Central European Labour Studies Institute, Bratislava, Slovakia

Across Europe, renewed attention to social dialogue and collective institutions has emerged in response to growing labour market inequalities and persistent labour shortages in essential sectors such as care. Yet, these dynamics often coexist with the systematic exclusion of marginalised groups from formal employment. This

paper examines this paradox through the case of the OMAMA programme in Slovakia, which engages Roma women from marginalised communities in early childhood care and education.

The paper addresses three research questions: (1) How do structural inequalities shape the exclusion of Roma populations from labour markets, particularly in care services? (2) How can targeted interventions such as OMAMA address both labour shortages and social exclusion? (3) What do such initiatives reveal about the evolving roles of the state and other actors where traditional industrial relations institutions have limited reach?

Theoretically, the paper links debates on labour market segmentation with research on ethnic marginalisation and social reproduction. It argues that Roma communities in Slovakia experience "deep exclusion," characterised by spatial segregation, limited access to education, and weak attachment to formal labour markets. Despite labour shortages, care sectors remain largely disconnected from this potential workforce.

Empirically, the analysis draws on qualitative case study research from the DEVCOBA project, including interviews with programme organisers and stakeholders, as well as document analysis. The OMAMA initiative, implemented by the NGO Cesta von, recruits and trains Roma women to provide early childhood development support within their communities, creating employment opportunities while addressing gaps in care provision.

Findings suggest that OMAMA mitigates inequality in two ways: by facilitating labour market inclusion for Roma women and by addressing unmet care needs, with positive developmental outcomes for children. However, these gains remain partial and dependent on project-based support. While the initiative operates largely outside traditional industrial relations frameworks, recent legislative changes incorporating "development of parental skills" as an accredited activity within the Act on Social Services create a framework that aligns with the work of omamas, implicitly recognising their role within the ECEC workforce.

The paper concludes that while such community-based initiatives show promise, addressing inequality in care sectors requires stronger state involvement and the extension of collective institutions to excluded groups.

E1 AI, algorithmic management and trade union responses

15:30 - 17:30 · Room: Styrerommet · Chair: Johan Røed Steen

Union Perspectives on AI Adoption and Associated Work Outcomes in European Financial Services

Dr Esme Terry, Dr Ioulia Bessa, Professor Mark Stuart

ESRC Centre for Digital Futures at Work, Leeds University Business School, University of Leeds, Leeds, United Kingdom

The proliferation of artificial intelligence (AI) technologies may have profound implications for work and employment. Trade unions have an important role to play in shaping AI adoption and deployment in workplaces (De Stefano and Doellgast, 2023; Wright, 2025). A range of factors shape employment relations contexts within which unions try to shape the governance of AI and associated impacts for workers (Doellgast and Wagner, 2022; Hassel and Özkiziltan, 2023; Marcolin and Gasparri, 2024; Pulignano et al., 2023). However, it can be difficult to map cross-national and sectoral level trends in relation to AI and work.

This paper foregrounds union perspectives on AI adoption, work-related impacts, and trade union responses in the European financial services sector. Financial services is considered to be a relatively advanced sector in terms of workplace AI adoption (Milanez, 2023). Yet, there is limited empirical research examining the AI landscape of the sector from a union standpoint. Contributing to understanding of union perceptions, concerns and activities in relation to AI, we conducted original quantitative survey of union officials and representatives (n = 193) operating across European financial services, distributed between January and February 2026. The survey captured multiple dimensions of AI transformation, including employers' use of AI, and outcomes for jobs, tasks, and skills. The survey also examined union involvement in AI adoption processes and decision making, as well as union concerns, strategic priorities, and activities. Expanded survey distribution and more advanced statistical analyses will be completed in spring/summer 2026. However, preliminary descriptive analysis of the survey data collected so far reveals several emerging patterns.

First, union officials report widespread employer use of a range of AI technologies in financial services, and responses indicate significant job disruption in the sector. Significant union concerns about AI adoption are highlighted regarding job loss, job quality, and skills development, among other issues. Despite these concerns, results indicate uneven and largely insufficient levels of union involvement in employers' AI adoption processes and decision-making. Preliminary analysis also raises questions about the readiness of unions to exert influence over AI in the sector, with concerns raised about capacity and resources issues within unions, which could limit unions' ability to exert influence over AI adoption processes and outcomes. We consider the implications of these findings for trade unions, the shaping of workplace AI, and possible outcomes for work and employment.

Regulate to innovate? Collective bargaining in the age of algorithmic management

Dr Marta Kahancová[1,2], Daryn Zholdasbay[1,2], Gabriele Medas[3], Fiona Dragstra[3]

[1]Central European Labour Studies Institute (CELSI), Bratislava, Slovakia. [2]Comenius University, Bratislava, Slovakia. [3]WageIndicator Foundation, Amsterdam, Netherlands

The rapid expansion of algorithmic management, defined as data-driven systems for monitoring, allocating, and evaluating work, is quickly reshaping power dynamics between social partners, especially in sectors like ICT, platform work, and logistics. This paper aims to understand how social partners are responding to the rise of algorithmic management, and what role collective bargaining plays in debates and negotiations on job quality, worker protections, and labour market equity. \ \ While academic and policy debates on algorithmic management often highlight risks such as work intensification and reduced autonomy, less attention has been paid to how collective bargaining is adapting to algorithmic control. This paper draws on original survey data from 2023 and 2025 from trade union and employer associations across 20 countries in Europe, and an analysis of 114 collective agreements. Findings show that transparency, data access, and the right to disconnect are now central to negotiations. However, binding protections remain uneven. Strong bargaining traditions (e.g., Norway, Germany) and supportive legal frameworks (e.g., Spain) facilitate sectoral agreements on broad principles, while company-level agreements focus on operational rights like explanation and appeals. The 2025 data shows growing standardization of these provisions, underscoring collective bargaining's ongoing relevance.

This paper also considers how these developments intersect with broader trends in labour market segmentation and inequality. As digitalization and AI-driven technologies create new forms of polarization between highly skilled workers who benefit from technological advancements and precarious workers subjected to algorithmic control, collective bargaining emerges as a critical tool for countering these divides. By securing protections such as data access and limits on surveillance, trade unions can help ensure that technological change does not exacerbate existing inequalities or create new vulnerabilities for marginalized groups. \ \ The paper also discusses the role of the state in supporting or hindering these efforts. Legal frameworks that mandate transparency, data rights, and worker consultation can amplify the effectiveness of collective bargaining, while their absence can leave workers exposed to unchecked algorithmic control. Ultimately, the paper argues for a coordinated approach involving unions, employers, and policymakers to foster job quality and improve working conditions in an era of rapid technological change. In doing so, it directly addresses the focus of Stream 3 on job quality, working conditions, and labour market mobility in a changing world of work, on how collective bargaining can mediate the effects of algorithmic management on job quality and working conditions, through collective action and instititional innovation and adaptation.

The governance gap in technology upgrading: Social dialogue and the limits of British Industrial Strategy within regions

Dr Abbie Winton, Prof Mark Stuart, Prof Charles Umney, Prof Kate Hardy

University of Leeds, Leeds, United Kingdom

Industrial strategy in the UK saw a resurgence post-2008 financial crisis, during which time successive governments have attempted to address stagnant growth through a seemingly disparate set of economic policies. A hesitancy surrounding "interventionist" measures has largely dictated policy direction, preventing any meaningful challenge to neoliberal norms, further entrenching a low-growth status quo. However, in a context of rapid technological change and enduring geopolitical crises, long-term plans for economic stability are becoming more urgent. In response to this, the current government set out its Modern Industrial Strategy, which outlined a lengthy series of disjointed measures geared towards "unlocking growth" through the acceleration of technology and AI adoption, and the removal of "investment blockers" across the country.

Whilst policies surrounding technological upgrading within the regions have adopted different configurations under volatile political leadership, they are broadly united in a failure to meaningfully engage workplace institutions. For example, trade unions today play only a peripheral role in influencing industrial strategy and the institutions that shape its rollout. Furthermore, sectors such as the foundational economy are merely included as an afterthought due to their "low growth" potential and low levels of technology adoption. Consequently, large proportions of the working population are neglected in the upgrading process. Whilst supporting high-potential industries may lead to 'quick-wins', there is a need to develop holistic multi-stakeholder ecosystems capable of governing technology upgrading, which are better equipped to manage the workplace challenges arising from rapid technological change.

Thus, we seek to address the question: How does the weak institutionalisation of social dialogue impact the government's capacity to deliver technology upgrading in the regions through industrial strategy? Drawing on interviews with policy stakeholders and industrial relations actors, we examine the causes and consequences of weak engagement with workplace institutions and explore historical precedents where worker participation played a more substantive role in shaping industrial policy. We argue that revitalising inclusive governance structures is essential for developing an industrial strategy capable of supporting equitable growth, effective technology adoption, and sustainable job creation. In doing this, we seek to contribute to both industrial relations and regional policy literatures by bringing the two into closer dialogue.

Exploring the potential of digitalisation for closing skilled labour gaps: Evidence from rural and industrialized regions in Germany

Dr. Toralf Pusch[1], Prof. Muhamed Kudic[2]
[1]WSI, Duesseldorf, Germany. [2]TH OWL, Lemgo, Germany

Digital transformation profoundly affects work, production, and labour markets. While much research examines its implications for work organisation and skills, less attention has been paid to digitalisation as a potential response to regional skill shortages. Given demographic change and uneven labour market dynamics, this question is especially relevant for rural industrialised regions with strong manufacturing bases, high specialisation, and limited labour supply. Digital technologies may offer opportunities to automate, reorganise, and rationalise work processes, thereby easing pressure from labour and skill shortages. Yet, the empirical evidence on whether and under which conditions these potentials materialise remains scarce.

Existing research largely focuses on job substitution, polarisation, or changing skill requirements, often at national or sectoral levels, and rarely addresses regional heterogeneity. In contrast, this project investigates how digitalisation relates to perceived skill shortages in rural industrialised regions of Germany. It utilises establishment-level data from the multi-wave WSI Works Council Survey, which uniquely combines information on digital adoption, skill shortages, and works council assessments, enabling a spatially and sectoral differentiated analysis.

Building on socioeconomic and sociological theories of technological change and industrial relations, digitalisation is conceptualised as an embedded process influenced by organisational and regional contexts. It may reduce demand for certain skills via automation while simultaneously creating new qualification needs. The balance between substitution and complementarity effects likely varies across firm and region types. This leads to three working hypotheses:

1. Higher adoption of digital technologies is associated with lower perceived skill shortages.

2. Digitalisation reconfigures shortages, reducing them in low- and medium-skilled occupations while increasing demand for high-skilled labour.

3. Assertive works councils can mitigate the negative effects of skill shortages on employee workload.

The empirical design involves two steps: identifying rural industrialised regions through multivariate clustering of INKAR regional data, and analysing survey results for the classified region types using data from 2023 and 2025.

The project contributes to closing a major empirical gap by linking digitalisation explicitly to skill shortage dynamics while accounting for regional variation. It is expected that digital technologies can mitigate shortages under certain organisational and regional conditions but may also generate new ones. The findings are relevant for firms, employee representatives, and policymakers, providing evidence-based insights into how digitalisation shapes the future viability of Germany's rural industrial regions.

References available upon request.

Autonomy-Biased Technological Change? Long-Run Trends in Worker Discretion in the United States

dr. Femke Cnossen[1,2], dr. Rowena Gray[3], dr. Marco van Leeuwen[4], dr. Ben Schneider[5]

[1]University of Groningen, Groningen, Netherlands. [2]GLO, Essen, Germany. [3]University of California, Merced, Merced, United States. [4]University of Utrecht, Utrecht, Netherlands. [5]University of Oslo, Oslo, Norway

We argue that worker autonomy is a central yet underexplored dimension of technological change in labour markets. Moving beyond the dominant framework of routine-biased technological change (RBTC), we introduce the concept of autonomy-biased technological change (ABTC), which examines how technological progress reshapes the degree of discretion and control workers exercise over their tasks.

Autonomy is intrinsically valuable as a component of well-being and positive freedom, and contributes to the development of human capabilities. While economists have largely focused on the automatability of routine tasks, autonomy has received comparatively little attention. This stands in contrast to a long tradition in sociology and related disciplines, which emphasizes the importance of autonomy and often hypothesizes that technological change reduces worker control. This paper bridges these perspectives by integrating sociological accounts of autonomy with economic frameworks centered on task content.

We make three contributions. First, we provide a conceptual synthesis of sociological and economic theories of technological change, contrasting autonomy-centered accounts with RBTC. This framework stresses the possibility that technological change may systematically affect jobs along the dimension of worker discretion, rather than (or in addition to) task routineness.

Second, we present new descriptive evidence on long-run employment shifts by autonomy level in the United States using data from the Dictionary of Occupational Titles (DOT) and decennial Census data. We classify occupations by their degree of autonomy (captured through measures of task discretion and repetitiveness) and document how employment has shifted across high- and low-autonomy jobs over the postwar period, including variation across demographic groups and local labour markets.

Third, we use O*NET data to examine both between- and within-occupation changes in autonomy from 2000 onward, conceptualised as freedom to decide, task repetitiveness, structured work and independence. This allows us to decompose changes into compositional shifts across occupations and changes in job content within occupations. Our preliminary evidence points to a nuanced pattern: within occupations, autonomy measures such as decision freedom and task repetitiveness suggest a decline in autonomy over time. Compositional shifts in employment partially offset this trend for some dimensions, with workers moving toward occupations characterized by higher decision-making autonomy, even as autonomy within those occupations diminishes. For other dimensions, such as repetitiveness, within- and between-occupation changes reinforce each other.

Taken together, these findings suggest that technological change may affect worker autonomy and that incorporating autonomy into analyses of labour market change provides a relevant complementary perspective to task-based approaches.

K1 Eurofound / tripartite cooperation

15:30 - 17:30 · Room: Machiavelli · Chair: Peter Kerckhofs

Employers’ organisations, trade unions and governments have different aims and objectives, while in each of the European countries there are also structures, traditions or institutions to facilitate tripartite concertation.

The presentations will focus on the following 4 main elements.

- The composition – who takes part and how are the members/participants elected or appointed? How many members/participants are involved
- The structuring – is there a generally meeting/plenary, and an executive or working committees? How does the making of an opinion work?
- What is the role of the government in the discussions? How does the interaction with the government work? How do the opinions of the committee influence/contribute to policy making?
- Does the structure/organisation have a secretariat? How many staff? How does the secretariat work? How does it help the making of the opinions?

First, a presentation will be given by Kristin Alsos (Fafo) on the long Norwegian traditions of tripartite concertation.

Secondly, Franz Clement (Liser) will present the Conseil Economique et Social from Luxembourg

Thirdly, a presentation will be given of the NESC in France and the CNEL in Italy, by Frédéric Turlan (Eurofound).

Finally, a more general comparative framework will be provided with examples from Ireland, Spain, Greece and Belgium, considering similarities and differences, by Peter Kerckhofs (Eurofound).

Parallel Session II

Thursday 17 September 10:00 - 12:00

A2 Wage-setting, minimum wages and pay equity

10:00 - 12:00 · Room: Auditoriet · Chair: Mikkel Mailand

Increasing the minimum wage to decrease labor cost? An analysis by microsimulation for the case of France

PhD Student Audin ROGER

Minsitry of Health, Paris, France. Sorbonne University, Paris, France

This paper analyzes the reduction in total labor costs induced by an increase in the minimum wage in France. Using the Ines microsimulation model developed by the French National Statistical Institute (Insee), I simulate a 2% increase in wages for all workers paid at the minimum wage.

Due to the complex of exemptions of the French socio-fiscal system, an increase in the minimum wage leads to a reduction in employers' social security contributions (SSCs) for workers earning between 1.01 and 3.5 times the minimum wage. I confirm existing results from L'horty (2000): overall, a 1% increase in the minimum wage reduces employers' SSCs by approximately €1.67 billion.

Wage cuts and recovery in the Great Recession

Dr Katrin Olafsdottir

Reykjavik University, 107 Reykjavik, Iceland

The paper studies how wages recover after a crisis. In some countries, there was widespread use of nominal wage cuts in the great recession. The wage cuts have been widely studied, but less is known about the wage recovery. There were extensive nominal wage cuts in Iceland from 2008-2010, and this paper examines the wage development through the recession and into the recovery.

Income inequality has been growing in many European countries in this century, and Iceland was no exception until 2008. The wage cuts led to a fall in the gini coefficient, and it has not increased since then, while the gini coefficient has continued to rise in Europe.

The data was collected by Statistics Iceland for their calculation of the Wage Index. The data was annual payroll data collected from employers, from 2008 to 2013. The data was a stratified sample of firms in the private sector, where the selection was made from firms with at least 10 employees, and an almost complete coverage of the public sector. The data included over 70,000 observations each year covering around 40% of the total labor market. The wage measure was regular hourly wages, which consists of base wages in addition to regular monthly payments, including bonuses and allowances.

The wage regressions were modeled on standard wage regressions as in Abowd et al. (1999), and Dahl et al. (2013). The first regressions are logit estimates determining the likelihood of getting a wage cut in the recession, using individual and organization data. The regressions used multilevel mixed-effects logistic regressions with the organization as the second level. The second regressions estimate the path of wage increases for those who experienced wage cuts. I used multilevel mixed-effects linear regression for this estimation, from 2010 to 2013. The regressions take account of the characteristics of the individual in the previous year, conditional on staying with the same firm, as well as the level of wage cuts during the recession.

Preliminary results show that the higher the initial wage, the higher the likelihood of wage cuts. Similarly, the higher the initial wage, the lower the wage increase during the recovery period. Women were more likely to receive a wage cut during the crisis, and after the crisis women received lower wage increases than men. Hence, the effects are in the direction of lowering wage dispersion, while maintaining the gender wage differential.

Competing Logics of Wage Equality: Unions, Employers, and EU Gender Pay Reform

Dr. Ines Wagner[1], Dr. Veronika Lemeire[1,2]

[1]University of Oslo, Oslo, Norway. [2]Hasselt University, Hasselt, Belgium

Women's position in wage-setting institutions has received increasing attention, yet gender gaps persist across advanced economies despite the proliferation of policy interventions (OECD, 2025). This paper investigates how two recent European Union (EU) initiatives - the Minimum Wage Directive (EU Directive 2022/2041) and the Pay Transparency Directive (EU Directive 2023/970) – seek to address these disparities through distinct institutional mechanisms (Pillinger 2023; Schulten and Müller 2021). In our analysis, we ask: First, how do collective bargaining actors respond to the EU Pay Transparency Directive, and why does it generate greater contestation compared to the earlier implementation of the EU Minimum Wage Directive? Second, how do these actors reconcile—or fail to reconcile—class-oriented and gender-oriented approaches to wage equality within their institutional practices?

We conduct a qualitative, comparative case study of three countries with coordinated and collective bargaining systems: Germany, Sweden and Belgium. We focus on national-level negotiations and early responses to the EU Pay Transparency Directive, examining how trade unions and employers' organizations adapt established wage-setting practices. To contextualize these developments, we draw comparisons with the implementation of the EU Minimum Wage Directive, which provides an empirical reference point for how EU labour regulation is translated into national industrial relations systems. Our findings point to two interconnected dynamics. First, the perceived legitimacy of different policy instruments is shaped by their compatibility with existing wage-setting institutions. In contrast with minimum wage policies, pay transparency measures directly challenge historically negotiated wage hierarchies by questioning the valuation of skills and jobs embedded in collective agreements. This generates greater resistance, particularly from actors invested in maintaining established bargaining structures. Second, the emergence of new actor coalitions influences how gender equality policies are advanced and contested. We find growing support for pay transparency measures among gender equality advocates within unions, state institutions, and civil society. However, these measures are frequently framed in technical and procedural terms rather than as fundamentally political interventions into power relations and value systems. This technocratic framing both facilitates adoption and limits the scope of transformative change.

Our study demonstrates that while minimum wage and pay transparency policies can be complementary in principle, they also reflect competing logics that shape their reception and effectiveness. By situating these dynamics within varied national institutional contexts, our findings underscore the importance of critically examining not only policy design but also the institutional and political processes through which equality measures are negotiated and implemented.

The Battle for Pay Equity

Dr Julie F Douglas

Auckland University of Technology, Auckland, New Zealand

As a central actor in industrial relations the state must provide leadership in confronting inequalities and inequities in society. The labour market delivers the most significant location for improvements to take place but is also the location where these injustices are firmly entrenched.

The battle for pay equity seeks to address the historic and enduring inequalities experienced by women in the labour market. A 2014 New Zealand landmark case established that an occupational group had been disadvantaged due to being female dominated under the Equal Pay Act 1972. Since this time the state has changed the law repeatedly to avoid subsequent claims being raised.

In 2025 the government passed legislation which retrospectively stopped 33 claims in process. This extraordinary move ignored usual parliamentary practice and denied any public consultation. In response a group of past MPs formed the People's Select Committee.

Pay equity is not only about money. It is fundamentally about mana, the value of work and the intersectionality of workers. Equal pay for equal work is a human right. The reluctance of successive governments to address the clear issue is explained predominantly through party ideology, patriarchy and the capitalist influences. New Zealand's current coalition government is ideologically neo liberal with a strong favouring for market forces to resolve workplace inequalities.

This individualistic approach denies the reality for those most disadvantaged in society, and allows the government narrative to prevail privileging economic imperatives and the persistence of gender-based discrimination.

This presentation follows the affected actors in this situation – the workers. The heavy handed actions of the government has led to a strong push back from many in the workforce and wider society. On going disadvantage and discrimination across many issues means this will not be a forgotten topic given 2026 is election year.

The institutions must be able to respond to societies' needs, and in the employment environment this is critical. The notion of social dialogue must be authentic if a goal of social justice is to be realised for all.

Overtime and Wage Adequacy in the European Union: Evidence from Survey Data and Collective Agreements

Dr Ferran Elias Moreno[1], Dr Janna Besamusca[2]

[1]University of Girona, Girona, Spain. [2]Utrecht University, Utrecht, Netherlands

The negotiation of overtime premiums represents a pivotal element of collective bargaining, serving dual theoretical purposes: discouraging excessive employer reliance on extended hours while compensating workers for the associated health risks and inconveniences to family and social life. Conversely, economic literature suggests such premiums may incentivise overtime uptake among low-wage earners seeking to supplement insufficient base incomes. Despite these competing views, there is surprisingly little insight into the relation between collectively bargained provisions and actual overtime remuneration outcomes across the European Union.

This study addresses this gap by quantifying the contribution of earned overtime premiums to worker income and evaluating their efficacy in supporting wage adequacy for low earners. Furthermore, it examines the relationship between collectively bargained provisions on overtime premiums and the incidence of overtime (premium) payments in the labour market. Methodologically, the research triangulates three distinct datasets: employer-reported overtime premiums (European Structure of Earnings Survey), employee-reported paid and unpaid overtime hours (European Labour Force Survey), and collectively agreed provisions on overtime premiums (WageIndicator CBA Database). We employ a counterfactual simulation to compare actual earnings against a scenario where overtime is remunerated at standard rates.

Preliminary findings indicate that while paid overtime attracts an average premium of approximately 20 per cent, its aggregate impact on monthly earnings is negligible, yielding gains of merely 2–4 per cent. Analyses suggest that this modest effect stems from the fact that workers who are paid overtime premiums are typically situated at or above the median earnings distribution, rather than being among the lowest-paid. Consequently, overtime premiums do not significantly alter wage adequacy outcomes. Analyses on employee-reported overtime hours show that, even if all unpaid overtime were remunerated at applicable premium rates, the resultant income increase (around 3.6 per cent) would remain insufficient to materially shift workers' positions within the earnings hierarchy.

Crucially, the analysis reveals a systematic association between paid overtime premiums and the inclusion of overtime provisions in collective agreements, suggesting bargaining systems effectively regulate paid overtime. However, no such correlation exists for unpaid overtime. This disconnect underscores that informal, unrecorded labour falls outside the scope of institutional regulation, limiting the capacity of social partners to address this growing dimension of precarious work.

Competition beyond wages in the Australian meat industry: firm adaptation and its implications

Dr Nic Avery

University of Sydney, Sydney, Australia

Repetitive manual work is susceptible to devaluation in industrial systems built around wage flexibility. Attempts to abolish low pay, such as occurs in 'ugly' jobs, through ambitious policies like significant increases to wage floors or multi-employer bargaining are usually opposed on the grounds that wage rigidity is at odds with employer innovation, productivity and economic growth. Given the social and political failures of neoliberal reforms, it is increasingly important to consider the alternative. Heterodox economists have long considered how taking wages out of competition can positively impact innovation as firms adapt to the new cost setting by competing through other means. Such arguments are necessary to inform a collective shift away from wage inequality, but insofar as wage policy accelerates competitive dynamics with harmful social and environmental effects, a critical policy agenda beyond the realm of pay is required. I seek to show this through an analysis of competition in the Australian meat processing industry, thinking through plausible pathways of transformation resulting from firm adaptation to an ambitious wage policy. I propose that firms would pursue (1) increased labour productivity, (2) reduced overheads and non-labour input costs, and (3) attempts to limit their exposure to the cost increase. I analyse firm capacities to increase production speed, automate the labour process, take part in mergers and acquisitions, and restructure supply chains. I argue some of these pathways of viable change may push the industry towards exacerbating climate risks, underscoring the need for combined, critical thinking on wage, industry and environment policy.

B2 Trade union strategies, democracy and representation

10:00 - 12:00 · Room: Nord · Chair: Bernd Brandl

"Silent assassins" and "slick HR". Surveying Anti-unionism in Ireland

Dr Michelle O'Sullivan, Dr Caroline Murphy, Dr Tish Gibbons, Dr Sarah MacCurtain
University of Limerick, Limerick, Ireland

Background

There has been increasing acknowledgement of the benefits of unions and collective bargaining in society including their role in reducing income and wage inequality and protecting vulnerable groups in society. Unions' ability to shape work and inequality, however, has been hindered by declining union density in many parts of the world (Visser, 2019). In this context, the EU Directive 2022/2041 on Adequate Minimum Wages (AMW) identified the need to strengthen collective bargaining because of its erosion and the decline in unionisation. The Directive identified several factors contributing to the decline in unionisation including union-busting practices, which form the focus of this study. Based on the experiences of paid union officials in Ireland, we investigate anti-union tactics by employers using a schema developed by Roy (1980) and Gall (2004) which categorised tactics as awkward, fatal, fear, sweet, harm, tame and evil. We also examine union officials' perspectives on potential policy measures to address anti-unionism and their expectations for the AMW Directive.

Research Methods

An online survey was sent to almost 300 paid union officials in 2024 through the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU). Of these, 179 responses were received, representing a response rate of 61%. The survey data was supplemented by interviews with 32 union officials undertaken in 2025 which add rich insight into anti-union practices.

Findings

We find that the three most common anti-union tactics union officials encountered were employer stonewalling of the union, victimisation of union members/activists, and line managers briefing employees against unions. While research generally refers to anti-union organisations as those which refuse to recognise unions and engage in collective bargaining, our findings indicate this is a narrow conception. Drawing on union officials' experience, it may be more accurate to characterise employers as adopting varied approaches to unions, regardless of whether they formally recognise them. We develop a typology that identifies five employer approaches to unions: archetypal antiunion ("silent assassins"), double breasters, double standard, hostile unionised ("slick HR") and cooperative unionised organisations.

In terms of policy measures to address anti-unionism, survey respondents favoured stronger legislation to achieve union recognition and penalties for employers who victimise union representatives. Union officials had positive expectations about the potential impact of the AMW Directive but were concerned that its effectiveness would be undermined in the transposition process.

Too much Organizing, too little Retention? Exploring AI based Retention Strategies as successful Trade Union Revitalization Strategy

Associate Professor Laust Høgedahl
Aalborg University, Aalborg, Denmark

Trade Unions are continuously looking for new ways of growing their membership base. For many years the 'organizer model' has been the go-to strategy for trade union revitalization. In this paper we show how trade unions are putting ever more focus on retention strategies to slow down the membership turnaround. The paper presents a theoretical framework for trade union retention based on case studies of three Danish trade unions. We show how even small trade union can benefit from AI-based retention tools allowing them to implement selective strategies targeting members with a high risk of opting-out.

Trade Union Democracy and Equality

Dr Rebecca Gumbrell-McCormick
Birkbeck, University of London, London, United Kingdom

Trade unions are one of the most important actors in the struggle for equality. Over the years, European trade unions have moved from being impediments to or even opponents of equality to, in some cases at least, proponents of equality. But in many cases, this transformation has remained a 'paper exercise'. Without the support of workers, the sorts of bottom-up changes that are necessary are unlikely to succeed. Yet rarely is the role of internal trade union democracy taken in to account in overviews of union action on equality.

In this paper, I will build on my previous work on industrial and union democracy, whether in a global context (Hyman and Gumbrell-McCormick 2020) or specifically related to union democracy and climate change (Hyman and Gumbrell-McCormick forthcoming) by exploring a different but related theme – why union democracy is necessary for the development of equality both within the unions and in their external policies, and will continue by examining examples of how some unions have approached this. For the purposes of this paper, I include inequality based on contractual status (open-ended vs. precarious), along with inequality based on gender, race or immigration status.

The paper will begin with an overview of theoretic approaches to union democracy, focusing on the debate between 'efficiency' and 'democracy', and between a focus on representative structures and achievements for workers. I will then explore how varying structural arrangements affect the extent of union democracy (the relative power of central and sectoral (or regional) bodies; the relative involvement of members and full-time officials; the relative weight of individual affiliates and national centres, and so on.). Finally, I will explore a few examples of union democracy in action and how this has affected the degree of internal equality within the union. I plan to examine the Dutch confederation FNV, the Swedish confederations LO and TCO, and possibly one British union.

I will conclude that progress toward equality requires taking workers' concerns into account, and mobilising them through democratic decision-making within the union so that together they can have a real impact on change within society.

Shop Stewards in a Changing Landscape – Rethinking Representation

Research professor Inger Marie Hagen
Work Research Institute/OsloMet, Oslo, Norway

Trade unions are democratic organizations in which shop stewards are expected to represent the interests of their members. However, how should this representative role be understood considering new challenges facing trade unions, including the climate crisis, artificial intelligence, democratic backsliding and increased personnel security and preparedness?

What kinds of interests are to be represented when new issues emerge on the agenda? How can collective interests be identified and defended? Moreover, declining member engagement (Dahl and Hagen 2023) places additional demands on shop stewards: what position should they take on issues that members are not actively concerned with? How can democratic representation be ensured under such conditions?

The theoretical framework of this paper draws on political theory, particularly Pitkin (1967), Rehfeld (2009), and Mansbridge (1999). Two distinctions are central: the representative as delegate (a transmitter of established interests) versus trustee (a custodian exercising independent judgment); and subjective interests (linked to individual characteristics) versus objective interests (not dependent on such characteristics). Saward (2006) is also pivotal, emphasizing that representation is not only about conveying pre-existing interests, but also about constituting them. The concept of the representative claim is central: claim-making involves presenting oneself as a representative of a group defined by characteristics or interests the group may not have recognized or prioritized.

This framework is used to explore how the representative role of shop stewards can be understood. Political theory has largely developed its insights from the political system, e.g. members of parliament and their constituencies. By contrast, representation has received limited attention within industrial relations (Medardi et al. 2021). Studies have primarily mapped institutional forms—such as statutory versus collectively agreed arrangements, electoral procedures, membership levels, comparative analyses, and the relationship between representative and individual participation and influence. Within the trade union movement, debates have largely centered on quota representation (e.g., women, youth, immigrants), while shared and group-specific interests—such as those related to gender—are often taken for granted.

This lack of conceptual engagement makes applying political theory necessary, though the paper also discusses limitations of using the political system as a starting point for understanding representation of trade union members.

Empirically, the paper draws on a study of multicultural representatives within a Norwegian trade union (Hagen and Dahl 2025), supplemented by quantitative surveys on members' expectations regarding the priorities of shop stewards.

The Quest for Engagement: Human Rights Due Diligence in Trade Union Work

Lara Helsen

HIVA - KU Leuven, Leuven, Belgium

Human Rights Due Diligence (HRDD) requires companies to identify, prevent, mitigate and account for adverse human rights impacts in their operations and supply chains. A core pillar of HRDD is meaningful stakeholder engagement, which involves dialogue, power sharing, responsiveness and participation of a plurality of voices (Bianchi et al., 2025; Harrison et al., 2019; Kujala et al., 2022; Passetti et al., 2019). Yet research shows that engagement often remains performative and company-driven, underscoring the need to explore more institutionalised forms of stakeholder participation (Collins & Roper, 2005; Curphey & Cole, 2022; Devin & Lane, 2014).

The revised EU Corporate Due Diligence Directive recognises trade unions and worker representatives as stakeholders in HRDD. This raises the question of how existing social dialogue structures can serve engagement in the HRDD process. European Works Councils (EWCs), as transnational and legally embedded structures, seem promising. However, research shows they are limited to episodic consultation and constrained by managerial control, while HRDD requires continuous engagement (De Spiegelaere, 2021; De Spiegelaere & Meylemans, 2020; Pulignano & Waddington, 2020). Nevertheless, trade unions are increasingly focussing on this structure to institutionalise engagement.

Drawing on action research with trade union representatives, this paper asks: (1) Given these constraints, how can EWCs effectively serve as vehicles for certain aspects of HRDD? (2) How do trade unions mobilise EWCs in HRDD processes, in the light of these limitations? The paper develops a framework based on HRDD interpretations (Landau, 2023), organisational power asymmetries and union capacity.

I hypothesise that EWCs will be mobilised in uneven and selective ways in HRDD. Their contribution will depend on management's agenda-setting power, timelines, and information quality, and on representatives' capacity to challenge narrow compliance framings of HRDD. EWCs may thus become procedurally central yet substantively constrained mechanisms for HRDD participation. For trade union engagement to be meaningful, other dialogue structures and strategies should be mobilised.

This article makes three contributions. First, it advances industrial relations scholarship by analysing HRDD as an emerging governance field influencing established institutions of worker representation. Second, it contributes to EWC research by showing how EWCs become procedurally central yet substantively constrained arenas for worker involvement in HRDD. Third, it enriches HRDD scholarship by providing empirical data on how stakeholder engagement is mediated by existing power relations and industrial relations institutions, challenging its often-assumed neutrality or purely managerial nature.

Against the Wind: Labour Organising at the Margins of the Swedish Model

PhD student BANASIAK Sophie

University of Gothenburg, Göteborg, Sweden

My PhD project examines how workers organise through trade unions under adverse conditions, particularly in contexts of precarious work and emerging forms of labour market fragmentation. It asks which factors hinder or facilitate union organising, and how workers and unions develop practices to overcome these challenges. The study draws on relational and social movement theory, power resource approaches, and perspectives on the interplay between structure and agency. Empirically, it is based on a qualitative multiple case study using interviews, covering notably organising efforts in platform-based taxi work, cleaning companies, migrant worker initiatives, and a support structure for undocumented workers in Sweden. Across these cases, I conducted interviews with 11 union officials and 21 precarious workers, the majority of whom were migrant workers.

Preliminary findings show that institutional contexts play a differentiated and ambivalent role. While rights such as the right to organise can enable collective action, unequal access to these rights – particularly for workers in non-standard employment – limits their effective exercise. For migrant workers, the risk of deportation under migration regulations further constrains organising. At the same time, organising may be constrained by limited knowledge of rights and unions, fragmented workplaces, employer hostility, and insecure employment. In response, workers and unions develop, to varying degrees, empowerment strategies centred on building knowledge of rights and collective action, fostering trust, and creating inclusive networks – for example through the use of interpretation and communication in workers' languages. These strategies may also involve facilitating and encouraging member engagement and activism. To influence employers, workers and unions mobilise available collective power resources, including public shaming, legal proceedings, and the threat or exercise of industrial action.

By analysing organising practices at the margins of the Swedish model, the project contributes to understanding how industrial relations actors respond to precarisation and labour market fragmentation. The findings highlight the central role of knowledge, trust, inclusivity, and member activism. They further suggest that organising relies internally on relational and network-based practices, while externally mobilising a variety of power resources depending on their availability to influence employers.

Keywords: precarious work; union organising; industrial relations; power resources; networks

C2 Climate, restructuring and the institutional response

10:00 - 12:00 · Room: Sør · Chair: Agnieszka Piasna

Facing climate transition? Youth Perspectives from Norway's Petroleum Workforce

Camilla Houeland, Sondre Thorbjørnsen

Fafo, Oslo, Norway

In this paper we explore young petroleum workers' experiences of and expectations to the green transition relating to the Norwegian offshore related industries, as well as their thoughts about their own jobs contribution to climate change.

To reach climate goals, there is consensus on the need to move away from fossil fuels. As much as Norway aim to be a global climate leader, it is a major petroleum exporter and there is a political and popular consensus to "develop, not dismantle" petroleum industry. (I.e. to decarbonise production rather than phasing out). Nevertheless, petroleum activities are expected to reach peak point in 2026/2027, and we already see petroleum companies dismiss workers as an early sign of the expected reduced activity. Since the last hired is the first fired, youth may be in a particular vulnerable position in terms of jobs security.

Media often presents youth' choices to study or work in petroleum as a puzzle related to climate change. Ups and downs in recruitment of young people to petroleum studies and jobs have typically been presented in media as a proxy for youths' attitudes to climate change: When difficult to recruit to studies or jobs in petroleum, assumptions are that youth don't want to work "in oil" because of its climate implications. When application numbers increase in education and jobs, it is assumed youth don't care about climate change. However, few journalists or academics talk to young oil workers, and there is a research gap on young energy workers.

In this paper we will explore young workers and petroleum students' motivation for working "in oil", their expectations to their jobs future as well as their thoughts about working in an industry causing climate change. We draw on data from four focus groups with young energy workers and students conducted in the spring of 2026: two groups of young trade unionists, one with apprentices and one with young professional workers. The participants are situated across skills levels; types of employment relations as well as energy value chains, allowing us to explore different positions of uncertainty.

Just Transition for whom? Developing a risk perspective to address new or reinforced labour market inequalities in the context of climate change

Dr. Adrien Thomas[1], Prof. Nadja Doerflinger[2]

[1]Luxembourg Institute of Socio-Economic Research, Luxembourg, Luxembourg. [2]TU Dortmund University, Dortmund, Germany

Just Transition – the main concept developed by the international trade union movement to address climate change – is primarily concerned with job losses linked to climate policies. This reflects the fact that trade unions' approaches to climate change and climate policies have been dominated by worries over employment, particularly in the well-unionized high emissions sectors. As unions from these sectors have often been able to determine policy stances on decarbonisation policies and climate change (Houeland and Jordhus-Lier 2022), little room has been left for other inequality dimensions in the debate up to now.

Building on the concept of risk and risk theory, our conceptual contribution expands on the topic of the inequality dimensions of climate change by focusing on health and safety (H&S) at work. This is a relevant topic in the context of climate change, as demonstrated by a range of research (van Daalen 2024; ILO 2024). We argue that the risk exposures of different groups of workers with regard to adverse climate impacts vary, and that workers have differential access to protective measures. Specifically, employment-related conditions play a role, in particular the workers' occupations and specific tasks which are embedded in organizational contexts and economic sectors. Moreover, socio-demographic characteristics such as gender, age or individual health condition matter when determining the exposure to climate risks. Finally, the place of work is essential as climate change brings in a spatial dimension. We explain these variations in risk exposure and differences in access to protection by analysing the production, distribution and governance of climate-related risks in the workplace. In doing so, our contribution demonstrates that climate change reshapes industrial relations, notably institutional responsibilities, power relations and social protection.

Based on this analysis, we argue that H&S – as a potential inequality dimension – should become a key pillar of Just Transition. Therefore, we provide suggestions on how to specifically integrate the topic at the international, national, sectoral and organisational level. Overall, the developed risk perspective makes clear why H&S should be integrated into Just Transition debates; the failure to adequately address workers' risk exposure would lead to new inequalities or reinforce existing inequalities along various dimensions, namely within and across countries, economic sectors and various groups of workers.

Transformation-related collective bargaining in German industry in times of polycrisis

Alexander Bendel, Thomas Haipeter

University of Duisburg-Essen, Duisburg, Germany

The German industry is currently facing major economic and structural challenges. These include high energy prices, increasing international competition, a shortage of skilled workers, and unstable global supply chains. At the same time, the industrial sector is undergoing a profound transformation driven largely by climate protection policies. A key element of this transformation is decarbonization, meaning the gradual reduction of CO_2 emissions in industrial production. Many industrial processes still rely heavily on fossil fuels like coal, oil, and natural gas. In order to meet climate targets, these processes must be replaced with more climate-friendly technologies, for example through the use of green hydrogen, renewable energy sources, or new production methods. However, this transition requires enormous investments in new facilities, infrastructure, and research. Another important challenge is digitalization. Many companies need to modernize their production processes by implementing digital technologies such as automation, data analytics, and artificial intelligence.

Against this background, the question arises how the actors in industrial relations respond to these challenges. This paper therefore examines the strategies and approaches that these actors develop. The analysis focuses in particular on collective bargaining policy: Which transformation-related regulations have trade unions and employers' associations in Germany been able to agree upon? The focus of the paper lies on three industries that are particularly strongly affected by these transformations: the automotive, chemical, and steel industries. The findings presented are based on case studies at the level of industry associations in German industry and include interviews with trade union representatives and employers' association representatives, as well as document analyses of collective agreements. The findings are presented in a comparative perspective: Which similarities and differences in collective bargaining policy can be identified across the three industries examined?

The findings presented were generated as part of the research project "Digital and Ecological Transformations in the Regulatory Environment of Labour Relations", which is funded by the German Research Foundation (DFG) within the programme "Digitalisation of the Working World".

Between crisis and prevention: social partner organisations' role in addressing extreme weather events across Europe

Victoria Cojocariu
Eurofound, Dublin, Ireland

Abstract

Extreme weather events - heatwaves, wildfires, floods, and droughts - are an accelerating reality across Europe, which is currently the world's fastest-warming continent. Such events represent a relatively new form of risk for labour and are thus a distinct type of challenge for the social partner organisations, compared to the traditional labour market issues that industrial relations systems addressed historically. This paper presents how - and how far - have trade unions and employer organisations engaged with this challenge, and what their (often limited) involvement reveals about the capacity and adaptability of collective institutions in a changing economy.

Using evidence collected in Eurofound's EU PolicyWatch database across EU Member States and Norway, the paper analyses social partner involvement across national, regional, sectoral and company-level measures, including collective bargaining agreements. The evidence reveals a picture of isolated, at times, but meaningful action against a backdrop of systemic under-engagement: social partner involvement in extreme weather governance is the lowest of all policy contexts tracked in the database. Trade unions have been most active in advocacy and standard-setting around worker protection, while employer organisations have focused primarily on business continuity and recovery. Both forms of engagement, however, remain fragmented, reactive and heavily concentrated in countries with stronger corporatist traditions - pointing to significant cross-national inequalities in workers' and businesses' access to collectively negotiated protection.

The paper describes the structural tension between the typically fast-moving, emergency-driven governmental responses to extreme weather events, and the deliberative, negotiated processes through which social partners operate and manifest their influence. Drawing on the typology of measures documented in the database (including financial support, insurance schemes, regulatory interventions, worker protection measures and longer-term prevention strategies) the paper identifies the specific points where social partner involvement is most feasible and most valuable, and where the deficit is most consequential. Extreme weather events can be considered a revealing stress test for industrial relations systems: they expose both the limits of existing collective frameworks and the potential for social partners to play a more substantive role in shaping climate adaptation as a domain of social policy. The paper concludes by reflecting on what greater social partner engagement would require — in terms of institutional design, regulatory mandates and the reconfiguration of the state's role — and what it could contribute to more equitable and worker-centred approaches to climate adaptation across Europe.

The effect of public green R&D funding on knowledge diffusion and workforce reallocation

Helena Sebicke[1], Janis Umblijs[2], Kjersti Misje Østbakken[3]
[1]University of Oslo, Oslo, Norway. [2]OsloMet, Oslo, Norway. [3]Fafo Institute for Labour and Social Research, Oslo, Norway

The green transition requires not only the development of low-carbon technologies, but also their diffusion across firms and sectors. Public industrial policies therefore rely on firm-level support for green research and development (R&D). While a growing literature shows that public R&D funding crowds in private green innovation (Umblijs and Sebicke 2026), we know less about whether public green R&D funding also facilitates the diffusion of green knowledge through the labour market.

In this paper, we study the labour-market effects of public green R&D funding using rich Norwegian register data that link firm-level R&D support to employer–employee records. We examine whether public funding affects hiring, separations, and workforce composition, and assess the role of labour mobility as a channel for green knowledge diffusion across firms.

Our analysis is guided by a simple mechanism: mobile workers transmit knowledge across firms. A large literature documents that labour mobility contributes to the diffusion of knowledge and innovation (Almeida and Kogut, 1999; Lissoni, 2009). Recent evidence further suggests that R&D subsidies can generate spillovers through worker mobility, benefiting firms that hire employees from subsidized firms (Reshid et al., 2025).

Using a stacked difference-in-differences approach, following Umblijs and Sebicke (2026), we trace firm-level labour outcomes before and after firms receive public green R&D funding. Our preliminary results show that the share of PhD-qualified employees rises significantly following funding receipt, with an estimated increase of approximately 0.5 percentage points. Given a baseline share of 1.6 percent, this represents a substantively meaningful change in workforce composition.

Exploring heterogeneity, we find that this increase is concentrated among firms that did not previously collaborate with universities, had lower levels of funding, and lacked prior experience in green R&D. This pattern suggests that public funding facilitates the internalization of research capabilities among firms with weaker initial conditions through the hire of PhD-trained workers. Ongoing work will extend the analysis to employee-level outcomes, including job-mobility and career trajectories.

Our contribution to the current literature is threefold. First, we provide causal evidence on the labour market effects of public green R&D funding at the firm level. Second, we identify labour mobility as a mechanism for knowledge diffusion, complementing studies focused on other innovation outputs. Third, by linking innovation policy to workforce reallocation, we offer new insights into how public R&D funding influence the pace and direction of the green transition.

Climate Change and Work in Norway

Ingrid Andrea Holland, Johanne Stenseth Huseby, Camilla Houeland
Fafo, Oslo, Norway

Climate change has for over a decade been described as a key megatrend shaping the world of work. However, existing research has predominantly focused on aggregate, quantitative and global-level impacts—such as employment effects across sectors or regions—while workplace-level experiences have received comparatively less attention. Much of the existing literature centers on extreme heat, and the implications of climate change in Global North contexts remain underexplored. This paper examines how climate change affects working conditions and labour relations in Norway.

Drawing on qualitative interviews with trade union representatives across sectors and geographies, we explore how climate-related events shape workplace risks, adaptation strategies and the role of unions. We further examine the extent to which extreme weather events are understood and framed as manifestations of climate change, and whether they are linked to broader processes of climate mitigation and adaptation.

Preliminary findings suggest that while direct impacts remain uneven across sectors and geographies, climate change is emerging as a workplace issue affecting occupational health and safety (HSE), service provision, working hours and commuting, thereby challenging existing institutional frameworks. These events also influence workers' and shop stewards' sense of safety, competence, and contingency planning.

Early findings also indicate that climate-related events affecting one workplace can have ripple effects in local communities, for instance through disruptions to supply chains and service delivery, highlighting the interdependence of work, services, and society. The study contributes to the literature by providing a work-centered perspective from a Nordic context and by highlighting how climate change creates new challenges for labour institutions and trade unions by highlighting the role of labour institutions in climate change risk and adaptation.

The paper draws on a research project conducted by Fafo on behalf of the Norwegian Confederation of Trade Unions (LO).

G1 Active labour market policy, activation and unemployment

10:00 - 12:00 · Room: Styrerommet · Chair: Janine Lescke

The positive effects of unemployment benefit in the social isolation of unemployed young adults. A case study in Barcelona

Dr. Joan Miquel Verd

Sociological Research Centre on Everyday Life and Work, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, Barcelona, Spain. Department of Sociology, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, Barcelona, Spain

Although since the 1990s there has been a discourse across Western countries that praises active labour market policies and dismisses 'passive measures' as ineffective, in Spain this discourse has not led to any significant changes in unemployment benefits. Although the Spanish unemployment protection system has incorporated some of the rhetoric of activation, in real terms the main characteristics of the structure established during the 1980s remain unchanged. Thus, workers have a relatively high degree of leeway regarding the use of unemployment benefit monetary transfers. Literature has identified some of the advantages of this particular 'freedom' enjoyed by unemployed Spaniards; however, to our knowledge, its positive effect on the potential social isolation that unemployed people might suffer has not been analysed. The study presented in this paper specifically examines this relationship among unemployed young adults in the city of Barcelona.

Starting with the work of Jahoda, Lazarsfeld and Zeisel (The unemployed from Marienthal), and continuing with subsequent studies, unemployment has been linked to social withdrawal. However, in the case of Spain, this situation appears to apply only to people who do not receive unemployment benefit. The research we present analyses the employment trajectories of a sample of 100 young adults, aged 25 to 39, living in four districts of Barcelona with different social backgrounds, all of whom have experienced significant periods of unemployment. The analysis combines both qualitative and quantitative data. This paper will present the results of the qualitative data analysis, which are particularly valuable in identifying the reasons and mechanisms that help to halt the social isolation caused by unemployment and how receiving an unemployment benefit has a positive influence on building new personal connections while being unemployed.

Preventing Unemployment through Regional Labour Market Hubs

Linda Heuer, Paul Malschinger

INSTITUTE FOR EMPLOYMENT RESEARCH, Nuremberg, Germany

International economic turbulence increasingly affects the German economy. Trade conflicts, sanctions, digitalization and artificial intelligence, geopolitical market shifts, and challenges related to ecological transformation place growing pressure on companies. Firms respond in different ways: some downsize, others restructure their activities and workforces, while some continue to expand. These processes particularly affect employees facing additional barriers to labour market participation, such as low qualifications, health restrictions, or care responsibilities.

In this context, regional labour market hubs represent an approach to prevent unemployment by accelerating job-to-job transitions. The labour market hubs examined in this evaluation are regional, digitally supported placement platforms involving local or regional offices of the Federal Employment Agency, individual companies, and employer or business associations. Their aim is to connect companies with staffing needs to employees threatened by redundancy at an early stage, enabling rapid and targeted job placement, particularly in regions where downsizing coincides with skill shortages.

The concept of networked organizational case studies is applied for this purpose. This concept was developed as part of qualitative evaluation of labour market policy instruments (Hohendanner et al. 2010) and is well-established in evaluation research (Pflüger et al. 2010).

The study addresses three research questions:

1. Which implementation models and processes of labour market hubs can be observed?

2. What motivates companies to participate or not participate?

3. Which design elements prove effective or ineffective under specific conditions?

Given the complexity and regional embeddedness of labour market hubs, the study follows a three-phase mixed-methods design. An initial qualitative exploratory phase, including case studies, is followed by quantitative analysis and a final qualitative phase for contextualization. From the perspective of organizational research, this approach provides new insights that are often insufficiently captured by individual survey methods. Furthermore, current debates on the evaluation of labour market policy instruments show that the use of mixed-methods designs significantly enhances the breadth and depth of findings (Osiander 2021). The study contributes by showing how labour market hub designs shape institutional coordination and job-to-job transitions under corporate downsizing.

Data collection for this evaluation will begin in February 2026. The conference will therefore provide an opportunity to present the research concept, offer insights into the start of the field phase, and promote exchange with stakeholders from practice and academia.

Fast Tracks and Dead Ends: Challenges in Renewing Employment Governance

Prof. Antti Saloniemi, Dr. PhD (Admin. Sci.) Sami Lind, Prof. Satu Pyöriä
Tampere University, Tampere, Finland

Continuous transformations in labour markets have prompted employment policy to seek new institutional and operational solutions. Our analysis centres on the Finnish reform that transferred responsibility for employment services from the state to municipal employment areas, based on the premise that local expertise would improve service effectiveness. Drawing on qualitative interviews (n = 19) from the Tampere region, we investigate how the reform reshapes the network of actors in employment governance—including education providers, employers, municipal authorities and third-sector organisations—and how these reconfigurations influence labour market dynamics.

In the wake of the reform, and framed largely as a technical adjustment, Finnish labour market policy adopted a distinct work-first principle that prioritises the rapid entry of unemployed individuals. Following this shift, pressures for swift job placement and employer-driven services have increasingly become mainstream. However, at the same time, tensions inherent in the reform's basic logic risk weakening the functionality of employment policy and further deepening labour-market segmentation.

The logic allocates resources to jobseekers who can meet employers' needs quickly, while those requiring more complex support are steered toward under-resourced or peripheral social and third-sector services. Thus, the 'work first'–based funding model further disadvantages individuals whose employment would require substantial training or rehabilitation. This situation reduces their attractiveness to actors such as education and training providers. Correspondently, third-sector organisations—historically central in assisting the long-term unemployed, migrants with limited language skills, and individuals with health-related constraints—report losing stable funding and a clear mandate. As a result, structural gaps are emerging for jobseekers most vulnerable to long-term exclusion.

The findings reveal frictions among actors, especially regarding the pace of interventions. The reform creates temporal mismatches between employers' expectations of immediacy and the longer processes required to build skills, strengthen work ability and support individuals with complex needs. Without mechanisms to safeguard these slower, relational and multiprofessional practices, the system risks evolving into a dual-track model: rapid placement for the 'job-ready' and fragmented or no support for those outside mainstream labour-market flows. The growing emphasis on rapid employment further limits opportunities for long-term human-capital development, weakening the foundations of a high-quality Nordic labour policy and sustainable working life.

The Finnish experience suggests that the prevailing work-first orientation remains largely unacknowledged, as policy discourse reframes employment governance through network or ecosystem narratives. However, this framing leaves multilevel power relations largely unseen and can render well-intended reforms dysfunctional, ultimately deepening labour market segmentation.

Unemployment Benefit Sanctions in Late Career: Evidence from Finnish Register Data

Dr. Jaakko Harkko, Dr. Satu Pyöriä
Tampere University, Tampere, Finland

OPEN STREAM

Background: Among older jobseekers nearing retirement, unemployment-benefit sanctions may encourage re-employment, but they may also shift labour-market trajectories towards retirement or neither employed nor retired (NENR) status. We examined whether sanctions for quitting work and job-search-related behaviour were associated with subsequent labour-market status, and the extent to which these associations were accounted for by socioeconomic characteristics, employment histories, and health-related factors.

Methods: We used nationwide Finnish register data on residents aged 55 years or older who were registered as unemployed in 2021–2022. We compared individuals who received an unemployment-benefit sanction during the year of unemployment entry with those who were not sanctioned. Using multinomial logistic regression with sequential adjustment, we estimated predicted probabilities and probability differences for being unemployed, NENR, retired, or employed in 2024.

Results: Among the 65,306 individuals included in the study, 3,058 (4.7%) received sanctions for quitting work and 1,564 (2.4%) received job-search-related sanctions. By the end of follow-up, 35% were unemployed, 5% were NENR, 26% were retired, and 34% were employed. In fully adjusted models, the predicted probability of being employed in 2024 was 31% in both sanctioned groups, compared with 34% among non-sanctioned jobseekers. Compared with the non-sanctioned group, those sanctioned for quitting work had a 3-percentage-point higher probability of being unemployed, whereas those with job-search-related sanctions had a 3-percentage-point higher probability of being NENR. Sequential adjustment substantially attenuated the crude associations and, in some cases, changed their direction.

Conclusions: The study provides evidence that unemployment benefit sanctions for older jobseekers may not lead to sustained employment gains but may instead be modestly associated with non-employment trajectories. When the economic consequences of sanctions for individuals are also considered, the overall balance of effects may be unfavourable. For policymakers addressing late-career unemployment, these results can inform the development of more supportive, targeted policy responses that better account for the constraints older jobseekers face.

Public employment programmes in the EU during the Great Recession: Lessons for a European Job Guarantee

Professor Maria Karamessini
Panteion University, Athens, Greece

Minsky's proposal for a Job Guarantee as a full employment strategy dates back to the 1980s. However, public employment programmes, which serve as its primary tool, have been consistently utilized to combat poverty and reduce long-term unemployment during major economic crises in the USA and Europe since the 1930s. Recently, post-Keynesian economists have proposed a similar European Job Guarantee, which has received support from the European Trade Union Confederation. The paper first examines the historical experiences of public employment programmes as multipurpose employment policy instruments, the theoretical differences regarding their goals and effectiveness, the originality of the Job Guarantee proposal, and the critiques it has faced. Next, it focuses on the objectives and key features of public employment programmes in the EU during the Great Recession, with a detailed analysis of the Greek Job Guarantee experience, to draw lessons and further develop the concept of a European Job Guarantee.

Regulating working time or rolling back protections? examining incompatibilities in UK activation requirements using time-use data

Dr Ceri Hughes

Work and Equalities Institute, Unviersity of Manchester, Manchester, United Kingdom

Activation policies, which link benefit entitlement to work-related conditions attempt to regulate people's time by directing them to be available for work and to evidence their job search efforts. Despite their importance in determining ongoing access to social protection, the time-demands embedded in activation policies are rarely explicitly discussed or scrutinised. This permits an unbalanced contract with the state, where expectations are strengthened with little regard for how they relate to the organisation of work by employers (Rubery et al., 2018).

This paper shows that this process of regulating working time can open up gaps in social protection and exacerbate labour market inequalities. Specifically, it examines the time demands that are attached to Universal Credit, the UK's main working-age means-tested benefit. These require people to take 'reasonable' steps to access work, which by default are set at 35 hours per week of work-search or the equivalent of 35 hours of minimum wage work. The paper assesses (1) whether these work-related time demands are compatible with wider obligations (2) how these demands vary depending on the type of work undertaken.

To address these questions I draw on time-use survey data and policy analysis. First, the paper simulates how the time demands associated with activation requirements vary under different working conditions. It shows that a time demand for 'full time minimum wage work' expanes when it is met by taking on non-standard working arrangements. Second, I estimate a set of wider 'minimum time obligations' relating to reproducing labour power, or basic social reproduction processes. I use national time-use data and estimate the minimum time that is required for social reproduction, extending previous analysis of the concept of 'discretionary time' (Goodin et al., 2008). Finally, activation time demands are assessed against this minimum time for social reproduction.

The findings indicate that people who move into more fragmented, lower paid roles effectively face greater demands under this policy. Meeting activation requirements is also more challenging or infeasible for people with caring responsibilities. Rather than penalising people who move into precarious work or those with caring responsibilities, the paper argues that the regulation of time through activation policies requires a rethink and proposes some ways forward.

Goodin et al (2008) Discretionary Time: A New Measure of Freedom. Cambridge University Press.

Rubery et al. (2018) 'Challenges and Contradictions in the "Normalising" of Precarious Work.' Work, Employment and Society, 32(3) pp. 509–527.

Parallel Session III

Thursday 17 September 14:30 - 16:30

D2 Self-employment, non-standard work and insecurity

14:30 - 16:30 · Room: Auditoriet · Chair: Katrin Olafsdottir

Non-standard workers' perceptions of labour market security in Denmark – who feels most insecure?

Associate Professor Stine Rasmussen, Associate Professor Laust Høgedahl, Associate Professor Mads Peter Klindt, Professor Thomas Bredgaard, Research assistant Anders Albin Esbjerg

Aalborg University, Aalborg, Denmark

Non-standard employment (solo self-employment, marginal employment, fixed-term work, temporary agency work, platform work etc.) is on the rise in many countries and is also on the agenda in Denmark. It is well-known and well-investigated that non-standard workers formally have fewer rights and enjoy less security compared to standard workers (Rasmussen et al, 2021; Scheuer, 2017). We also know from qualitative studies how non-standard workers experience precariousness, for instance in academic work (Glerup et al, 2018).

However, in a Danish context we don't know much about how larger groups and different groups of non-standard workers experience labour market security. Neither do we know how they perceive the labour market institutions that provide security (e.g., the unemployment benefit system providing income security and adult vocational training systems that provides employability and future career opportunities). In the literature, Denmark is often emphasized as an example of an inclusive labour market, but is it also the case when we investigate the perceptions of non-standard workers?

In this paper, we address the following questions:

- To what extent do different groups of non-standard workers in Denmark experience labour market security?

- Which groups of non-standard workers feel most insecure?

- How do different groups of non-standard workers perceive the labour market institutions that provide labour market security?

- What can be done to improve labour market security for non-standard workers in Denmark?

We use data from 'Tryghedsbarometeret', a Danish survey among the adult economically active population (18-67 years) collected from June to August in 2025. The data includes more than 12.000 respondents in different employment forms (full time wage earners, part-time employees, temporary workers, solo self-employed, freelance workers, temp agency workers, platform workers etc.). The survey is representative for the working population. The survey measures subjective experiences of various types of securities (eg. job security, employment security, income security) as well as perceptions of labour market institutions (eg. the unemployment benefit system, the vocational training system and the help provided by jobcentres).

The paper shows that labour market security is unevenly distributed in Denmark. In general, non-standard workers do feel more labour market insecurity compared to standard employees and some groups of non-standard workers feel more labour market insecurity compared to other groups of non-standard workers. The most insecure groups appear to be platform workers, then freelancers and temp agency workers. This calls for reflections about how to improve labour market security for these groups in particular.

(In)Security and Its Drivers Across High-Income Countries: Labour Market Institutions, Employability and Technological Change in Comparative Perspective

Postdoctoral researcher Zhen J. Im[1], Prof Janine Leschke[2], Prof Emmanuele Pavolini[3]

[1]Lappeenranta-Lahti University of Technology, Lahti, Finland. [2]Copenhagen Business School, Dept. of Management, Society and Communication, Frederiksberg, Denmark. [3]University of Milan, Milano, Italy

Recent decades have seen growing concerns about job and employment (in)security linked to the expansion of non-standard employment, outsourcing and the fragmentation of employment relations, developments often associated with labour market deregulating reforms and retrenchment of welfare state institutions. More recently, automation and artificial intelligence in the workplace, alongside decarbonization and the green transition, have generated new concerns about job displacement and obsolesce of skills. In this context workers' perceptions not only of job loss risks but also of their ability to adapt to labour market changes have become increasingly central to experiences of job (in)security.

This paper asks: what factors shape workers' perceptions of job and employment (in)security in contemporary labour markets? We conceptualise job (in)security as a multi-dimensional phenomenon encompassing not only the risk of job loss but also perceived chances of re-employment and perceived access to education and training opportunities that may shape feelings of job and employment (in)security. Particular attention is paid to workers' perceived preparedness to cope with automation and artificial intelligence in the workplace, as well as perceived risks associated with decarbonization and the green transition.

The paper draws on original large-scale cross-sectional survey data fielded in 2024, covering approximately 10.000 people in nine EU-countries, the United States and South Korea. The dataset provides comprehensive measures of subjective job(in)security, perceived employability, access to retraining opportunities and perceptions of institutional support for labour market transitions, while enabling comparative analysis across different welfare and labour market regimes

The paper moves beyond narrow measures of job insecurity focused solely on perceived risks of job loss and by examining how workers evaluate their capacity to adapt to contemporary labour market change. We estimate regression models assessing how individual characteristics, household circumstances, workplace conditions, and perceived institutional support shape workers' perceptions of security across countries.

Preliminary findings suggest that workers' perceptions of job and employment security are strongly associated with perceived employability and access to training opportunities. Workers who believe they would be able to find a new job if unemployed, and those expecting access to training schemes, report significantly higher levels of perceived security. By contrast, concerns about skills obsolescence, automation and AI, and risks linked to decarbonisation policies are negatively associated with perceived job security.

Non-standard employment in the Danish and Italian public sector – scope, variation and problems

Mikkel Mailand

FAOS, Uni. of Copenhagen, Copenhagen, Denmark

Until relatively recently, non-standard employment (NSE) was in academia believed to be less prevalent in the public than in the private sector (e.g. Keller and Seifert, 2015). This perception was based less on empirical evidence than on an understanding of the public sector as protected from competition.

The perception found indirect support in comparative studies of public sector industrial relations (IR), often referring to two ideal-types of public employer models. The 'sovereign employer' label stresses the unilateral state regulation, building on the Weberian ideal-type of bureaucracy with a distinct class of civil/public servants, granted with high level of job security and job quality, but lacking collective bargaining rights. The other ideal type is the 'model employer' with no fundamental separation between public and private employment legislation and an absence of separate conditions for civil servants. Still, also in this ideal-type the public sector it presumed to provide better job security and job quality than in the private sector, but this ideal-type includes an extensive role for collective agreements (Bach and Bordogna, 2016; Bordogna and Pedersini, 2013).

When the wave of New Public Management (NPM) spread, the notion of particularly attractive conditions in the public sector was challenged. However, research focused mainly on other dimensions of NPM than employment types. Moreover, when studies of NSE later spread, there was not much focus on public sector employees. Hence, still today, there is a lack of knowledge about non-standard employees in the public sector.

Alongside the tendency to exclude the public sector in studies of NSE, there has been a tendency to regard all NSE as 'precarious' and a tendency to focus on exactly the precariousness dimension of NSE, i.e. the (presumed less rewarding) job security and job quality, as the only problematic part of these employment types. Other potential problems have largely been ignored.

The present article will critically address these three assumptions and tendencies in a comparative study of the public sector in Denmark and in Italy belonging to different public sector IR models.

This will be done by analysing: 1) The scope of NSE in the public sector and the extent to which it is precarious, 2) The impact of the public sector IR institutions on the scope of NSE and the extent it is precarious, 3) The way the social partners and others problematize these types of employment.

At the frontline of delivering precarious work

Associate Professor Satu Pyöriä, Researcher Niklas Mäkinen
Work Research Centre WRC, Tampere University, Tampere, Finland

Although Nordic countries are recognised for high-quality employment, nearly one-third of their workers are engaged in non-standard employment, with Finland showing the highest share. Meanwhile, active labour market policies (ALMPs) are shifting away from skill investment towards individual activation. International research shows that stricter conditionality and benefit sanctions lead to transitions into low-quality jobs, lower earnings, and repeated unemployment.

This article examines the intersection of precarious jobs and frontline public employment service delivery under increasingly workfare-oriented ALMPs. It asks: What are frontline employment service workers' views, roles, and strategies in either guiding jobseekers into low-quality jobs, or reducing their risk of falling into precarious traps in the labour market? The analysis draws on a 2022 structured online survey of 122 Finnish frontline workers across three regions, focusing on public employment services in the context of partial unemployment (that is, involuntary part-time jobs).

In Finland, unemployment benefit eligibility requires seeking full-time work—a condition that is both enabling and restrictive. When full-time jobs are scarce, frontline workers often encourage part-time work, framing it as a stepping stone. However, these jobs frequently become precarious traps: they rarely offer advancement opportunities. Paradoxically, while these jobseekers remain entitled to employment services during full-time job search, they are no longer served. They become excluded from services such as labour market trainings due to scheduling conflicts and because resources are fully allocated to serving fully unemployed jobseekers, despite often being low-educated and in clear need of skill development. Moreover, if people resign from jobs accepted under frontline worker encouragement, they face sanctions.

Employment services may thus participate in normalising precarious work. In the long run, such ALMPs may strengthen employers' incentives to offer low-quality jobs. We argue that, overall, public employment services and frontline workers play an underexamined role in shaping whether labour markets evolve towards high-quality or low-quality employment.

Counteracting fragmentation and the devaluation of care work: policy and regulatory levers

Senior Lecturer in economics Anne EYDOUX
Cnam, Lise-CNRS and CEET, Paris, France

This submission deals with the political economy of care and care work, exploring the old and new challenges of care policies and regulations. It mostly relates to Stream 1 and relies on research conducted within two international researches (ANR-DFG Access-Plus and Who Cares? Care in a Post-Pandemic World).

The COVID-19 pandemic has revived what Nancy Fraser (2016) calls the 'crisis of care' and stimulated the literature on care work, care policies and regulations (Guimarães et al., 2024 ; Gottfried et al., 2026) as well as on the political economy of care (Fagertun et al., 2024 ; Dasgupta, 2024).

This communication will deal with the political economy of care, focusing on care work, the care labour market, care policies and collective regulations of care work. Care work includes unpaid domestic work encompassing family as well as community care. It also refers to paid employment in a segmented labour market, which more or less reflects the organization of the care economy, the mix of the public and private or market coverage of social needs, the degree of institutional recognition or (de)valuation of care work, and the extend of non-standard employment, especially in the personal service sector where domestic workers are weakly covered by labour laws and collective regulations.

We will first provide an overview of the European context of care policies. Focusing on the French case, we will then review long-term policies that contribute to frame care jobs and working conditions: austerity policies resulting in insufficient resources for social care and social needs, market-oriented policies promoting the diversification (and slow privatization) of service providers, and the development of a wide domestic personal service sector (Eydoux, 2025). Next, focusing on childcare, long-term care and the personal service sector, we will analyse how these policies, together with collective regulations and workers' mobilisations, contribute to the structuration and (re-)segmentation of the care labour markets. We will notably underline that, whereas care workers usually hardly mobilize (because of unpredictable working schedules, dispersed workplaces or moral dilemmas), they recently developed innovative forms of mobilizations, often outside (and sometimes next to) trade-unions (Doumenc et al., 2024; Ledoux et al., 2026). Finally, we will explore policy and regulatory levers that proved efficient, and will suggest pathways to make care work more decent, to better (and equally) recognize and protect care workers, to favour their professional mobility and career progression, and to guarantee quality care services that meet social needs.

C1 Just transition and trade union strategies in the green transition

14:30 - 16:30 · Room: Nord · Chair: Ingrid Holland

Trade unions' strategies over green transition in mining. The case of the PGE in Poland

Dr Szymon Pilch, Dr Jacek Burski, Prof. Adam Mrozowicki, MA Olga Gitkiewicz
University of Wrocław, Wrocław, Poland

This paper investigates the role of the social dialogue in Polish mining as the mechanism of the negotiations and consultations between unions, state and companies over green transition and gradual phasing out of coal industries with subsequent liquidation of the labour markets in regions. Given that 70% of Poland's energy mix is based on fossil fuels, mining is of strategic importance due to the political and economic interests of a state compelled to pursue decarbonisation. The IR system in the coal is highly politicised, and the strong position of the state as the sector's largest shareholder, coupled with the limited role of formal social dialogue institutions, leads to direct negotiations on mine closures between workers with companies and the state. Unions are forced to form alliances with various actors and to use their resources to develop strategies for negotiating the phasing out of coal, and to formulate the labour movement's positions on the green transition. Whilst the strong position of unions in the coal industries and the large (though declining) number of mine workers, and high unionisation rates, increase bargaining power, competitive pluralism and ideological diversity within the union movement limit the creation of a unified strategy.

The analysis is concentrated on the case of state-owned company PGE as an example of mid-transition to green energy. Producing both conventional (based on lignite coal) and renewable energy and declaring growing investment in the latter, the PGE case shows an ambiguous role ofunions in the transition process. The paper asks the question of the role of unions in phasing out the lignite coal to renewables with special attention paid to union strategies in the light of power resources approach (Silver, 2003; Wright 2000) by showing the relational dynamics of 'power in use' (Korpi 1985) of unions vis-à-vis other actors' resources to create schemes of actions. On the other hand, it builds on the concept of 'just transition' (Galgoczi, 2020) to show the adaptation of interest-reconciliation mechanisms and strategic approaches of unions to the transition in one of the CEE countries characterised with 'patchwork capitalism' (Gardawski, Rapacki 2021). The findings stem from expert interviews collected with social partners engaged in social dialogue in, e.g., PGE Company in the light of lignite coal exit (planned to execute in 2038) on the company and regional level (as the consequences of the process sparked fear of unemployment and economic collapse in mining regions).

A Just Transition to Electric Vehicles: Worker Representatives and the Legitimacy of Restructuring in the Auto Industry

Prof. Dr. Anja Kirsch[1], Mr. Tobias Zimmermann[1], Prof. Dr. Ian Greer[2]
[1]*Freie Universität Berlin, Berlin, Germany.* [2]*Cornell University, Ithaca, United States*

Global efforts to decarbonize transport concentrate on the shift from internal combustion engine vehicles (ICEVs) to battery electric vehicles (BEVs). In the automotive industry, this shift entails major technological and strategic changes with profound implications for work and employment. In contrast to earlier phases of industry restructuring motivated by automation and globalization, the BEV transition is driven by regulation designed to reduce CO2 emissions and is thus aligned with the societal goal of environmental sustainability. Yet, it is argued in public discourse that environmental sustainability must not be pursued at the cost of social sustainability. Instead, a "just transition" to a decarbonized transport sector must balance both goals. This is

difficult to do because restructuring generally entails cost-cutting and losses in the quality and quantity of work. Thus, in the BEV transition, worker representatives face a "jobs vs. environment" dilemma in deciding whether or not to support restructuring. In this paper, we examine how worker representatives in the auto industry perceive the shift to BEVs and whether they view it as a "just transition". Drawing on interviews with unionists and works councilors in Germany and the United States (US), we identify three perspectives on the transition. Two perspectives attest legitimacy to restructuring: in the "just transition as progress" perspective, losses are outweighed by potential gains, and in the "just transition as preservation" perspective, current workers are protected from the losses that occur more broadly. A third perspective, "just transition as unlikely", perceives losses arising from the transition as unjust and casts doubt on the aspiration of pursuing both environmental and social sustainability. An analysis of the prevalence of the perspectives indicates that worker representatives in both the United States and Germany are rather skeptical about the transition, focusing mostly on preservation of the status quo and the minimization of losses, while viewing it as unlikely that the procedures and outcomes of the transition will be just. We argue that if restructuring in the auto industry is to meet the ideal of a just transition, it is important to consider that employee representatives' perspectives on just transition as progress foreground employee participation and involvement in restructuring decisions at an early stage, as well as the provision of choices for individual employees regarding their personal transition within the restructuring process.

Navigating the Green transition: Trade unions as agents of transformation or delayism?

Dr Helena Seibicke[1], Ines Wagner[2]
[1]University of Oslo, Oslo, Norway. [2]University of Oslo, Oslo, Germany

Drawing on empirical research from the Horizon Europe E-GRUiEN project, this article explores whether Norway's deeply institutionalised system of social dialogue offers resilience or reinforces path dependency amid the turbulence created by the twin transitions of decarbonisation and digitalisation. The Norwegian energy sector embodies both ends of the disruption spectrum, with declining fossil fuel industries on one side and expanding renewable energy on the other. Key challenges in this sector include the mismatch between legacy collective bargaining structures and new labour forms, shifting representational demands from traditional unions to emerging worker groups, and the increasing politicisation of green transition agendas. Although not an EU member, Norway is tightly integrated into the EU's climate policy regime via the European Economic Area, aligning closely with initiatives such as the European Green Deal. These EU frameworks place growing demands on national-level actors to achieve ambitious decarbonisation goals while ensuring social inclusion. Trade unions potentially find themselves simultaneously defending a petro-economy (enforcing carbon lock-in) and operating inside EU climate governance (as integral to the Green Deal's Just Transition). This paper aims to shed light on their political agency and strategic positioning under this ambiguity. The central research question is how do Norwegian energy sector trade unions navigate the structural tension between national embeddedness in fossil fuel producing economy and transnational integration into EU green transition governance — and does EU-level engagement function as a driver of domestic transformative adaptation or as a legitimation resource for managed incrementalism? Theoretically, the analysis builds on concepts of turbulence (Ansell et al.), Schumpeterian disruption (Bodrožić & Adler), and just transition frameworks (Galgoczi; Kyriazi & Miro), to examine how labour market governance structures mediate structural transformation. Norway is a fossil fuel exporter facing its own EU-aligned net-zero commitments and is aligned with EU energy policy through EEA agreement etc. This theoretical foundation informs the empirical analysis (qualitative interviews of social partners) to explore how Norwegian tripartite arrangements engage with EU-driven climate objectives. We examine whether social dialogue institutions, particularly trade unions, foster proactive innovation ('bouncing forward') or entrench inertia ('bouncing back'). While Norway's social dialogue mechanisms provide institutional stability, their capacity to drive transformative change in line with EU and national policy ambitions remains limited. This study contributes to broader debates on the domestic anchoring of EU climate governance and offers critical insights into how institutional design and power relations shape national responses to labour market and environmental governance in turbulent times.

The Role of Trade Union Representatives in the Green Transition at Company Level

Elin Moen Dahl
Work Research Institute, OsloMet, Oslo, Norway

I want to submit to the open stream.

Climate change is recognized as a key driver shaping the future of work. In addition to direct effects, such as extreme weather, the transition to a greener economy will influence where people work, how they work, and the skills they need. This makes the green transition a relevant topic for trade unions. While trade unions at the international and national levels are already engaged in environmental policies, recent studies show that these strategies do not always translate into active engagement at the company level. This paper examines the following research question: How do trade union representatives engage in the green transition at company level? My contribution is a case study of a Norwegian trade union that organizes employees in the private sector. The study is based on 19 in-depth interviews with company level union representatives from four different industries (cleaning, security, machine operation/construction and mining) conducted in 2025-2026. While previous studies have primarily focused on sectors where the green transition may lead to job losses, my study expands the literature by examining industries where the green transition requires changes in how work is performed. The analysis of the data will be guided by theories of roles and representation. Preliminary findings reveal that the green transition is rarely discussed in social dialogue, even though the companies have implemented green initiatives. While union representatives perceive the unions' green transition strategy as active, they observe that few members show interest in the topic. Furthermore, a lack of time and knowledge, as well as customer demands, limits the union representatives' scope of action in the green transition at the company level. The paper provides insight into how company level union representatives navigate the expectations of members, the national union, and other external actors.

'Green transition' of manufacturing industries and the importance of trade unions: political and practical challenges

Dr. Steffen Lehndorff

IAQ, University of Duisburg-Essen, Germany

Manufacturing industries are at the beginning of a fundamental 'green transition'. Many questions about how to shape this socio-ecological transformation are highly controversial. This applies in particular, if we take the example of Germany, areas of political conflict such as infrastructure investment and its public financing, reliable long-term product market regulation fostering 'green future markets', and labour market regulation aimed to increase collective bargaining coverage.

Against this background, a green and just transition can only succeed to the extent that the initiatives of social actors, particularly in the areas of industrial policy and regional structural and transport policy, are brought to bear. In addition to environmental organisations and initiatives, trade unions and works councils in particular are called upon here because of their special involvement, but also because of their practical experience.

The paper proposed presents the most controversial political topics in the German public debate where trade union intervention is needed. This intervention, in turn, is the more effective the better trade union action at the ground floor is developed, that is, at the local and regional levels. It sheds light on the political positioning of the trade unions in these issues at national level and draws attention to practical steps that the trade unions are trying to take at company, regional and sectoral level in an attempt to lend more weight to their political demands—including the growing challenges and political headwind they are facing.

The paper is based on recently published articles such as "Learning from the New Deal for a Green Transformation: The importance of trade unions"

https://journal.uia.no/index.php/EJWI/article/view/1445

and „Sozial-ökologische Transformation der Industrie und die Rolle der Gewerkschaften: Politikfelder und Praxis-Ansätze"

https://elibrary.duncker-humblot.com/article/75316/sozial-okologische-transformation-der-industrie-und-die-rolle-der-gewerkschaften-politikfelder-und-praxis-ansatze

J1 Quality of work, working time and decent work

14:30 - 16:30 · Room: Sør · Chair: Inger Marie Hagen

Dormitories on Wheels: Technology, Control and Migrant Labour in European Road Transport

Mr. Davide Marchi
University of Milano-Bicocca, Milan, Italy

Title: Dormitories on Wheels: Technology, Control and Migrant Labour in European Road Transport

Over the last decades, the occupation of long-haul truck driving has undergone significant transformations. Digital technologies and advanced driver assistance systems (ADAS) have reshaped driving practices, while digital fleet management systems enable companies to monitor and coordinate drivers' activities in real time (Levy, 2023; Levy & Barocas, 2018; Gong et al., 2025). At the same time, the sector has experienced important changes in workforce composition, with an increasing recruitment of migrant workers from Eastern Europe, Asia and Africa (Benedetti et al., 2025; van Gardingen & Atema, 2023). This paper asks how technological change interacts with the growing internationalisation of the workforce in the European road transport sector. More specifically, it investigates how digital technologies reshape the organisation of work, the autonomy of drivers and the living and working conditions of workers in long-haul trucking.

The paper contributes to debates on the relationship between technology and labour by connecting research on digital workplace surveillance with the literature on labour regimes. Building on the concept of dormitory labour regimes (Smith, 2003; Pun & Smith, 2010), the paper introduces the idea of "dormitories on wheels" to describe a labour regime in which the truck functions simultaneously as workplace and living space. This perspective highlights how technological coordination and spatial arrangements combine to structure labour control in transnational transport networks.

The analysis draws on academic and grey literature on the road transport sector, available statistical data, and empirical material collected within an ongoing qualitative research project. The empirical component consists of thirty in-depth interviews with actors involved in the sector, including truck drivers, union officials, employers and representatives of sectoral associations.

Preliminary findings suggest that technological innovations do not simply lead to deskilling but rather to forms of reskilling, as the skill requirements of the occupation are transformed. At the same time, these technologies facilitate new forms of labour control and workforce segmentation. Digital coordination systems reduce drivers' autonomy while enabling firms to manage geographically dispersed labour forces. At the same time, drivers are often channelled into work arrangements that require long periods spent living in trucks, effectively transforming vehicles into mobile dormitories. These dynamics contribute to the

emergence of a labour regime that combines digital surveillance, spatial isolation and migrant labour recruitment.

Generative AI and Job Quality in Europe: Does Collective Representation Matter?

Dr Dragos Adascalitei, Dr Tina Weber
Eurofound, Dublin, Ireland

The rapid diffusion of generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) into workplaces has reignited debates about the impact of technology on job quality. While research increasingly examines AI's productivity and labour-market effects, far less is known about how GenAI reshapes the day-to-day experience of work across multiple dimensions. Moreover, the role of collective representation in shaping these outcomes remains largely unexplored.

This paper asks: how does GenAI use at work affect job quality, and does trade union membership moderate this relationship? We draw on the 2024 European Working Conditions Survey (EWCS), covering over 28,000 workers across the 27 EU member states, which for the first time includes a direct measure of GenAI use. Job quality is operationalised through seven Eurofound indices: physical environment, social environment, prospects, skills and discretion, work intensity, working time quality, and earnings.

We estimate OLS regressions for each dimension, controlling for gender, age, education, occupation, sector, contract type, and country fixed effects, with survey weights. The moderating role of unions is tested via an interaction term. Results show that approximately 11 per cent of European workers report using generative AI in their jobs with GenAI use being heavily skewed in knowledge intensive sectors. GenAI use is associated with substantially higher skills and discretion, earnings, improved physical environment, and better prospects. However, GenAI users also report significantly higher work intensity, revealing a dual-edged effect on job quality. The interaction analysis demonstrates that collective representation meaningfully moderates these relationships. Most notably, it buffers roughly two-thirds of GenAI's work intensification effect and contributes to improving the physical environment. However, collective representation also attenuates the positive association between GenAI and skills and discretion, possibly reflecting more standardised task allocation in workplaces where collective bodies are present.

These findings contribute to the emerging literature on AI and working conditions. They suggest that collective representation plays a substantial role in shaping how GenAI adoption affects job quality, mitigating intensification pressures while potentially constraining individual autonomy gains. This carries direct implications for social dialogue and for policies governing the deployment of AI in the workplace.

Work speeds up, collective agreements stand still: the overlooked issue of workload in collective bargaining

Maria Sedlakova

Eurofound, Dublin, Ireland

Work intensity - encompassing speed, pressure, interruptions, and emotional demands - is a central determinant of job quality, yet it remains insufficiently regulated in collective bargaining. This paper asks two core research questions: (1) To what extent do collective agreements address work intensity and its drivers? (2) How does this regulatory coverage compare with workers' reported exposure to intensifying demands across Europe?

The analysis draws on the findings from a mapping of 94 collective agreements from three low-paid sectors across 11 EU Member States and Norway which identifies clauses linked to work intensity. Agreements are compared against Eurofound's job quality framework to capture coverage of psychosocial risks, ergonomics, pace determinants, and workload-related provisions. The findings are compared with data from the European Working Conditions Survey (EWCS) 2024, which provides EU-wide indicators on speed, deadlines, emotional demands, and interruptions.

The theoretical contribution lies in integrating findings on the content of collective bargaining with job quality and psychosocial risk frameworks, defined in the Eurofound's job quality model. While job quality research documents growing psychosocial strain, the collective bargaining literature has paid comparatively little attention to workload regulation. This paper bridges these domains by conceptualising work intensity as a multidimensional phenomenon shaped not only by working time arrangements but also by work organisation, emotional labour, and staffing levels.

Findings reveal a striking imbalance. Only a handful of 13,347 clauses refer to psychosocial risks and four to ergonomics, with virtually no provisions regulating workload pacing, quantitative demands, emotional labour, or staffing. By contrast, EWCS 2024 shows rising work intensity across Europe, with women particularly affected due to sectoral concentration in public-facing roles. Over one-third of workers report working at high speed or to tight deadlines for most of their working time, and 32% face three or more simultaneous pace determinants. While some collective agreements indirectly address intensity through working time rules or allowances, they do not regulate organisational drivers identified in EWCS data. The paper concludes that work intensity constitutes a major blind spot in collective bargaining, resulting in a growing misalignment between workers' lived experience and the regulatory scope of agreements. This gap has implications for job quality, gender equality, and the future of labour market regulation in Europe.

The usual suspects: Tripartism crisis and the labour law reform in Portugal

Raquel Rego

Iscte-IUL, Lisboa, Portugal. CIES-Iscte, Lisboa, Portugal

This paper examines Portugal's Trabalho XXI labour law reform proposal, approved in the Council of Ministers in July 2025, which led to a general strike uniting both union confederations on 11 December. Presented under the banner "flexibilise to value and grow", this reform offers a case study in the reconfiguration of social dialogue and tripartite governance under conditions of far-right electoral advance.

Drawing on documental analysis of the draft legislation, social partners' statements through media coverage, the paper interrogates how labour law reform is legitimised and contested when its empirical foundations remain publicly undeclared.

The paper develops two interconnected arguments. First, it interrogates the reform's empirical premise. Portugal's unemployment reached its lowest level since 2002 in late 2024, alongside historic employment highs, thus, conditions that sit uneasily with a reform framed around law rigidity and competitiveness. Job precarity persists, particularly among young workers, whose unemployment remains nearly triple, a striking figure in a country with one of the most aged populations in Europe. Yet rather than addressing this precarity, Trabalho XXI expands managerial discretion on young contracts.

Second, the paper draws attention to what the reform omits. In a country increasingly exposed to extreme weather events, Trabalho XXI contains no provisions addressing the challenge of working under those conditions. Devastating storms – such is the case of Kristin impact in the country central region this year - and extreme heat are already disrupting outdoor work, yet the reform remains entirely silent on protections for workers facing such events. Similarly absent is any engagement with algorithmic management in worker monitoring, despite these being among the most important transformations reshaping employment relationships in the XXI century.

The paper situates these dynamics within the minority centre-right coalition government of Luís Montenegro, which has relied on shifting parliamentary support from the far-right Chega. Employer confederations, meanwhile, publicly characterised Trabalho XXI signaled appetite for it to go further. This position turns the government a moderate actor and narrows the space in which trade union counter-proposals can be received as reasonable.

In short, despite the process remaining ongoing at the time of writing, the paper makes a reflection on the so-called crisis of tripartism in the context of the current fourth wave of the far-right. A reform that speaks the language of the XXI century while reaching back the XIX is negotiated by the usual suspects: with the terms of the debate decided elsewhere.

Working-Time Constraints, Gender and Multiple Jobholding in Australia

Inga Kristoffersen & Alison Preston
The University of Western Australia

This paper examines the determinants of multiple jobholding (MJH) in Australia, with a focus on how job quality and working-time arrangements shape the likelihood of holding more than one job across gender and age groups. While MJH is often interpreted as a response to financial need, we ask whether it is more fundamentally driven by constraints embedded in primary jobs—particularly limitations in hours, scheduling, and employment arrangements—and how these constraints vary across the life course.

The paper contributes to debates on job quality and labour market segmentation by shifting attention from individual motivations toward the structural features of employment that give rise to MJH. In doing so, it highlights how gendered patterns of work organisation—especially in sectors characterised by part-time, casual and variable hours—shape labour supply behaviour and contribute to differences in employment outcomes.

We use data from the Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) Survey over the period 2001–2024. The latter is a longitudinal household survey. The analysis combines descriptive evidence with multivariate models to distinguish between cross-sectional associations and within-person changes over time. The empirical approach allows us to examine how both observed characteristics and changes in individuals' circumstances are associated with transitions into and out of MJH.

The results show that MJH is a persistent but uneven feature of the Australian labour market, with higher incidence among women and younger workers—young women, in particular. Across all groups, constraints on hours in the primary job emerge as the strongest and most consistent correlate of MJH. Employment arrangements also play a key role: casual work, self-employment and employment in sectors with fragmented or non-standard working-time structures are all associated with a higher likelihood of holding multiple jobs. Within-person estimates confirm that increases in primary job hours and improvements in work–family balance are associated with reductions in MJH, suggesting that secondary jobs often function as an adjustment to limitations in primary employment.

Overall, the findings indicate that MJH reflects not only financial pressures but also the organisation of work, particularly the availability and scheduling of hours in primary jobs. These patterns are especially pronounced for women, pointing to the importance of gendered job structures in shaping labour market outcomes. The results have implications for how job quality is conceptualised and measured, and for policy debates concerning working-time regulation, employment security, and labour market mobility.

Changing Concepts of Decent Work

Dr Urvi Khaitan[1], Dr Benjamin Schneider[2]
[1]Harvard University, Cambridge, United States. [2]University of Oslo, Oslo, Norway

The term "decent work" was introduced to policy and research discourse by the International Labour Organization in 1999 and has set the agenda for global labor policy commitments. In this paper, we examine the development of concepts and ideas of decent work, good working conditions, and job quality in a historical perspective. We show that conceptualizations reflected contemporary concerns with deleterious aspects of employment and worker groups who were viewed to be particularly vulnerable. Importantly, policy views around the idea of good work have also shifted or even reversed as both social norms and real-world circumstances changed.

We illustrate these changes through five examples of inflection points or movements for improved conditions that reveal developing views and reversals in perspective regarding the structure of employment arrangements and work locations. In turn, these shifts are often reflected in changing standards. We examine debates around women's work in the home, waged work for men as a dependent relationship, protective labor legislation and underground work for women and children, advocacy for labor standards for women in the informal economy, and the Quality of Working Life movement and current movements for job quality. Our analysis is transnational, bringing together perspectives across the United States, Europe, and India. We use qualitative evidence from the ILO conventions, national labor regulators, governments, unions, civil society organizations, and social commentators that recount views and present labor standards in each of these examples. As conceptual debates and the revision of ideas about what constitutes decent work shape policy goals and regulations, we suggest areas of current concern that may influence future conceptualizations and policy in coming decades.

F1 Migrant labour, segmentation and ethnic fragmentation

14:30 - 16:30 · Room: Styrerommet · Chair: Bjorn Dapi

The political economy of recruitment, selection and matching of high-skilled migrants: the case of overseas trained and migrant teachers to the UK

Dr Zinovijus Ciupijus, Prof Chris Forde, Prof Jonathan Winterton, Dr Saheira Haliel
Leeds University, Leeds, United Kingdom

Bartlett (2014) had highlighted how the control over teaching profession, which once had been seen as an exclusive prerogative of national governments, had been re-shaped by market commodification linked to international migration flows. Being depended on visas and employer sponsorship, not dissimilarly to other groups of migrant workers, overseas-trained teachers had been used to fill skills gaps and labour shortages in parts of the sector characterised by greater socio-economic disadvantage (Bartlett, 2014). It was often accompanied by an unequal treatment of migrant teachers linking skills recognition to their nationality (Manik, 2014). This paper expands on such perspectives by looking at processes of teacher migration to the UK using secondary sources and primary data collected through the interviews with employer, recruiter, union and training provider representatives as well as looking at an overseas-trained teacher trajectory. It identifies an increased regulatory segmentation post-Brexit and contradictory policies such as selective demand for migrant teachers on one hand and increasing visa costs for them as sources of tension. The analysis shows how professional preparation in the country of origin continues to shape workplace experiences of post-migration. It tracks how UK national regulations such as qualified teacher status (QTS) supported by unions, relied on intermediaries and employers and implemented by training providers continue play a central role in selection. It highlights that teaching remains a highly regulated profession in the UK and suggests that policymakers still give a priority to nationally based formation of teachers: international recruitment being a complimentary strategy only. This paper further explores how matching between migrant teachers and employers take place: rather being a straightforward matter of skills matching for certain teaching subjects, it involves cultural adjustment work from multiple actors and the activation of relational forms of capital, the latter being more broadly associated with high-skilled migration (Al Ariss and Sayed, 2011). This paper contextualises its analysis within structural challenges affecting teaching in the UK: high numbers of teachers leaving the profession, particularly but not only due to work pressures, and changing social roles of schools.

Segmented Mobilities: Bangladeshi Workers Across Shipbuilding and the Wider Italian Labour Market

Nicola Quondamatteo[1], Al Amin Rabby[2]
[1]University of Trento, Trento, Italy. [2]Shahjalal University, Sylhet, Bangladesh

This paper investigates the labour trajectories of Bangladeshi workers in Italy by following their experiences across the shipbuilding sector and the wider labour market. While existing literature often frames labour markets as dualized, this study argues that they are better understood as highly segmented into multiple occupational niches, characterised by different levels of labour exploitation and work formality.

Focusing on the Italian shipbuilding industry as a key entry point, the paper examines how Bangladeshi workers move not only within shipyards - across subcontractors, tasks, and hierarchies - but also between sectors such as construction, restaurant work, and car washing, often marked by varying degrees of compliance with labour standards, (in)formality and social rights. These trajectories reveal a broader landscape of "segmented mobilities," in which workers navigate a complex mosaic of opportunities and constraints.

Adopting an actor-centred perspective, the analysis highlights how workers actively strategize their trajectories across and within sectors, while being shaped by structural factors such as outsourcing regimes, legal precarity, and the uneven regulation of labour. By bringing together intra-sectoral and inter-sectoral mobility, the paper shows how mobility itself is structured, channelled, and unevenly distributed across niches.

In doing so, it contributes to debates on migrant labour and labour market segmentation by demonstrating that mobility is a process embedded in - and constitutive of - a fragmented labour market marked by differentiated levels of labour exploitation and differential inclusion.

Social partners as actors of labour migration policy: The case of the metal and electrical industry in Germany

Kyriakos Melidis, Prof. Dr. Thomas Haipeter
Institute for Work, Skills and Training (IAQ), University of Duisburg-Essen, Duisburg, Germany

Recent trends such as population ageing, labour market shortages, and increased refugee and migration mobility have prompted a renewed examination of the relationship between migration and employment. Work is increasingly recognised as a central condition for the successful economic, institutional, and social inclusion of migrants, while migration is increasingly viewed as a key strategy to address workforce shortages across multiple sectors. In this context, the role of collective bargaining actors has gained renewed attention within the broader field of migration policy.

These tendencies are particularly evident in the German metal and electrical industries. Amid the dual transformation driven by digitalisation and decarbonisation and under conditions of economic recession, the labour market shows contradictory dynamics: on the one hand, employers' associations estimate the loss of around 150,000 jobs by 2026; on the other hand, labour shortages persist, with approximately 330,000 vacancies reported in STEM occupations. The effective labour market integration of individuals with a migration background and refugees, as well as the recruitment of additional foreign workers, has therefore become a key strategic concern for both social partners in the sector.

The employers' association Gesamtmetall has formulated various demands and policy recommendations aimed at activating domestic labour potential through qualification programmes and inter-sectoral mobility, as well as proposals for reforming migration laws to facilitate targeted recruitment of skilled workers from abroad—many of which have been reflected in recent legislative initiatives. The trade union IG Metall develops from a labour perspective migration- and integration-related policies and organises a range of workplace and social initiatives to promote migrant inclusion.

The contribution seeks to reconstruct the migration strategies of both social partners in the German metal and electrical industries, highlighting points of convergence and divergence and the dynamic relationship between them. The empirical analysis is based on expert interviews with representatives from both organisations, complemented by document analysis of publicly available materials from their online sources.

This research forms part of a project funded by the German Research Foundation (DFG).

Core–periphery dynamics in the European shipbuilding and changing patterns of labour mobility. The tale of Norway and Poland

M.A. Sondre Thorbjørnsen[1], Dr. Jan Czarzasty[2], Dr. Horacy Dębowski[2]

[1]Fafo, Oslo, Norway. [2]SGH Warsaw School of Economics, Warsaw, Poland

In the paper we wish to explore the changing core-periphery dynamics between Western and Eastern Europe, through a case study comparison of shipbuilding networks in Norway and Poland. We approach the countries' respective status in these networks as indicators of their relative core–periphery roles/positions within the European production system. While investigating the developments in production and staffing strategies, we describe how the shipbuilding sectors in the two countries in focus have come to interact over time, and analyze how their relative positionality has developed since 1990s, also taking into account the role of mobile labour and the impact of labour mobility on industrial relations and social dialogue systems in each country. The contribution is empirically based on the findings from the Ship Global project.

H1 Working time, gender, care and work--life balance

14:30 - 16:30 · Room: Machiavelli · Chair: Kaja Regård

Parents' Employment Precariousness, Non-standard Work Schedules, and the Time They Spend with Their Children

Mette Bluhm, Prof. Dr. Martina Dieckhoff

University of Rostock, Rostock, Germany

Our study explores the implications of employment precariousness and non-standard work schedules on the time parents spend actively engaging with their children. Our foremost motivation is to contribute to a better understanding of how employment precariousness impinges on affected individuals' personal lives, especially on their relationships and family life. However, by focusing on the time parents spend with their children in various activities we are also able to contribute to better understanding the role of employment precariousness and non-standard work in shaping children's life outcomes. We know from existing work that parents' non-standard work is associated with numerous negative outcomes for children including depression, behavioral problems and lower educational attainment. By using time use data, we are able to shed more light on one potential mechanism which may drive the relationship between parental precarious employment and children's poorer outcomes: time spent with children.

We examine different dimensions of precarity and non-standard employment: including fixed-term employment, in-work poverty, shift work and weekend work and how they relate to time spent with children on different activities, such as reading to children, helping them with homework, playing, and sports. Our nuanced analysis also differentiates between toddlers (0-2 years of age), pre-school children (3-years until school entry) and elementary school children (from school entry until 10 years of age) and also provides separate analyses for men and women. Using the German Time-Use Survey from 2022 provided by the German Federal Statistical Office, and drawing on a sample of working adults with at least one child ten years or younger in their one- or two-parent household (n = 9,946 diary days), we are able to show that employment precariousness and non-standard work schedules are substantially and significantly associated with the time parents spend with their children on certain activities even after controlling for other socio-demographic and work-related variables. Inter alia, we find that parents on fixed-term contracts spend notably less time reading to, playing or having conversations with their pre-school children than their counterparts on permanent contracts, this holds for fathers and mothers, though effects for fathers are only marginally significant and less

pronounced. By contrast, for toddlers, we find that shift work decreases time spent with children on the same activities. Here this effect is stronger for fathers than mothers.

Atypical Employment and Work–Life Balance: Gender Differences

Delphine Remillon[1], Olivier Baguelin[2]

[1]INED, Aubervilliers, France. [2]University of Evry Paris-Saclay, Evry, France

Short fixed-term contracts (i.e., contracts of less than three months, or even less than one month) and multiple jobholding have expanded significantly in France since the early 2000s. However, the trajectories and lived experiences of the workers concerned vary widely, depending on their position in the life course, as well as their family and professional resources.

This paper examines the effects of these new forms of employment on the articulation between work and family life, as well as on workers' well-being and their satisfaction with various dimensions of their jobs. We use data from the first wave of the Families and Employers Survey (FamEmp, INED, 2024), a nationally representative linked employee–employer survey. These data are matched with administrative records, which provide more accurate measures of wages, multiple jobholding, and contract duration—including very short contracts—based on employers' earnings declarations.

While fixed-term contracts account for around 10% of salaried employment, a larger share of workers experience short-term employment over the course of a given year. In particular, such contracts are often combined with a stable main job (permanent contract or civil service position), potentially leading to long working hours and difficulties in balancing work and family life.

For others, who have spent their entire careers in short-term contracts—especially in sectors where such arrangements are the norm—the flexibility associated with these contracts may sometimes provide more personal time, albeit at the cost of job insecurity.

This study investigates this diversity in the use of short-term contracts and their effects on work–life balance, distinguishing between different configurations depending on employment trajectories and family situations, particularly the partner's occupational status. Special attention is paid to gender differences. We first construct a typology of trajectories in atypical employment using sequence analysis and hierarchical clustering. We then assess how these trajectories relate to various indicators of well-being, including life satisfaction, job satisfaction, work–life balance, mental health, and job mobility intentions.

Satisfaction with the division of domestic and care labour in dual-income households

Sebastian M. Ugarte[1], Tomas Aguayo[2]

[1]University of Chile, Santiago, Chile. [2]Ministry of Finance, Santiago, Chile

Submitted to 'open stream'.

Despite significant changes in women's educational attainment and labour force participation, the division of domestic and care work within dual-income households remains markedly gendered. Women continue to bear a disproportionate share of unpaid labour, even when both partners are employed full-time. Such persistence carries substantial consequences for women's career advancement, economic security, and well-being, and one that perpetuates gendered behavioural patterns across generations. While scholarly explanations typically combine around relative resource, time availability, and gender ideology theories, these frameworks are often applied in isolation or through static, individual-level designs that may limit their collective explanatory power. Crucially, the mediating role of perceived fairness, which translates objective task allocations into subjective satisfaction, remains theoretically central but empirically underexplored.

This study addresses these limitations by developing and testing an integrated theoretical model that explains satisfaction with the division of domestic and care labour in dual-income households. Analysing data from Chile's 2023 National Time Use Survey (N = 2,600), the research moves beyond an individualistic lens by employing a dyadic approach to examine how partners' characteristics concurrently shape mutual satisfaction. The model specifically investigates how perceived fairness mediates the relationship between objective task allocations and subjective satisfaction outcomes.

Three primary hypotheses are tested. First, drawing on relative resource theory, we expect that men's greater share of unpaid domestic and care work is positively associated with both partners' satisfaction, particularly in couples where women hold higher relative income. Second, grounded in equity theory, we hypothesise that perceived fairness mediates the link between objective task allocation and satisfaction, where equal divisions predict higher satisfaction only when perceived as fair by both partners. Third, building on time allocation and gender role theories, we expect that perceived time constraints mediate the relationship between paid work hours and satisfaction.

The findings are expected to demonstrate that perceived fairness is a central pathway linking objective arrangements to subjective satisfaction. Furthermore, the results suggest that dyadic interdependence shapes outcomes in ways that individual-level models cannot fully capture. These insights may have direct practical implications for the design of work-family balance policies, including parental leave and flexible work arrangements, and for couples negotiating more equitable domestic and care arrangements.

Keywords: domestic and care labour, unpaid labour satisfaction, dual-income households, perceived fairness, dyadic analysis, time use.

Working More in Later Life? Older Women and Their Contribution to Closing the Skilled Labour Gap

Dr. Angelika Kümmerling

Institut Arbeit und Qualifikation (IAQ) - Duisburg-Essen University, Duisburg, Germany

Germany, like many other countries, faces the challenge of declining birth rates and an ageing society, which is giving rise to a growing shortage of skilled workers and labour more broadly. In its skilled labour strategy, the previous federal government identified increasing women's labour market participation – particularly that of mothers, but also of older women – as a central instrument for closing the gap between labour demand and supply (BMAS 2022). The share of older workers in employment (defined here as employees aged 55 to 64) has in fact risen significantly over the past ten years, reaching 75.2 percent in 2023 – an increase of 13.5 percentage points since 2013, with the rise being especially pronounced among women. Despite these gains, a comparison with employment rates among 25- to 54-year-olds reveals that older workers remain considerably less well integrated into the labour market – and this applies to both men and women (Eurostat 2026). Moreover, employment growth among older workers has been driven predominantly by part-time work (Drescher/Brussig 2021): the share of part-time employment among women aged 50 and over is on average even higher than among women in the procreative life phase (Kümmerling 2025). Looking at working time developments by life phase (Anxo et al. 2013), it is further notable that working hours among women in the so-called empty nest phase have increased considerably less over the past decade than those of mothers – even though this group might be expected to have the greatest potential for extending their working hours. Against this backdrop, the paper examines the conditions under which older women can contribute to closing the skilled labour gap. Drawing on the LFS, the SOEP, and the BAuA Working Time Survey, it analyses desired and actual working hours over time and identifies working conditions associated with longer working hours among older women.

The Polycrisis of Early Childhood Education and Care: Social Reproduction, Labour Supply and Segmented Markets in Four Cities

Dr Eva Herman[1], Dr Mathew Johnson[1], Professor Ian Greer[2], Dr René Böhme[3], Emilie Emilie Lessard-mercier[4], Isabelle Roberge-Maltais[5], Zanaya Sadiyay Hussain[2]

[1]University of Manchester, Manchester, United Kingdom. [2]Cornel, Itheca, United States. [3]University of Bremen, Bremen, Germany. [4]Laval University, Qubec, Canada. [5]HEC Montreal, Montreal, Canada

International evidence highlights that Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) systems are foundational to inclusive labour markets: they both enable parental employment and generate work opportunities—often for women from marginalised groups. Yet, despite clear social and economic benefits, ECEC sectors are facing acute and interlocking challenges, including shortages of places, workforce attrition, affordability constraints, and widening inequalities of provision. This paper asks: How does the current ECEC 'polycrisis' manifest in different institutional contexts, and how do local actors respond to these crises? We further investigate how

welfare, gender, and industrial relations regimes shape the responses and their outcomes across four city-regions.

The paper's theoretical contribution lies in overcoming the gender-blind nature of polycrisis literature by connecting the crisis of ECEC to broader contradictions between capital accumulation and social reproduction, emphasising how the long-term gendered and racialised devaluation of care labour interacts with marketised funding models to destabilise care systems and labour markets. Through this lens, we conceptualise the care crisis as a site where welfare state restructuring, marketisation, and gendered inequalities coalesce, generating distinctive but comparable pressures across diverse policy regimes.

Empirically, the paper draws on a comparative qualitative study of ECEC in four city-regions: Bremen, Greater Manchester, Montreal, and New York City. These cases reflect contrasting welfare and market models, including universalist approaches (Quebec), liberal market-oriented systems (US, UK), and hybrid state/church provision (Germany). Across 2022–2025, we conducted interviews with ECEC workers, union representatives, employers, activists, and policymakers, triangulated with grey literature and statistical sources to contextualise local crises

Our findings indicate that all four cities face similar crises—persistent shortages of staff and places, alongside growing segmentation of provision and uneven quality—yet local responses diverge. In the UK and US, market-based funding has intensified inequalities and depressed pay and conditions, with policy and union strategies centred on professionalisation rather than confronting structural undervaluation. In Montreal, universalist ambitions are undermined by supply shortfalls, provoking waves of mobilisation and strike action, alongside state efforts to expand ratios to meet demand. Bremen faces widening disparities linked to inconsistent funding and weak regulation in flexible childcare segments.

Across cases, we show that while local actors recognise symptoms of crisis, they struggle to articulate arguments for public investment that move beyond market logics. Achieving gender equality and social justice requires a well-funded, well-regulated care economy, anchored in decent pay and conditions for ECEC professionals

The ongoing increase in the statutory retirement age for women in Austria – initial evidence

Bettina Stadler

Institute of Sociology University of Graz, Graz, Austria

Demographic trends such as falling birth rates and the growing proportion of older citizens are driving pension reforms in many European countries. Countries where the retirement age differs for women and men are aligning these age limits upwards. Austria and Switzerland are currently in the process of raising the retirement age for women (OECD 2025). In Austria, the statutory retirement age for women has been raised by six months each year since 1 January 2024. Existing analyses of the increase in the statutory retirement age for women in the United Kingdom between 2010 and 2020 show impacts on women's labour force participation, mental health and life satisfaction (Giusta/Longhi 2021), as well as on women's income, poverty and social exclusion (Cribb/Emmerson 2019). An analysis of the increase in the statutory retirement age for women in Australia between 1995 and 2013 concluded that income fell particularly among low-income groups, whilst the impact on middle- and high-income groups was less pronounced (Morris 2022). Existing analyses do not systematically examine differences by occupation and thus work-tasks, highest level of education or other individual characteristics. In this presentation, we aim to show the results of an initial analysis of these issues for Austria. The data covers the first two years following the increase in the state pension age. Specifically, the study examines which women are able to remain in the labour force until the later state pension age and which women spend this period unemployed, in early retirement or outside the labour force. The analysis takes into account socio-demographic characteristics, sector information, company size, and a classification of occupations into manual, intellectual or social activities, derived from occupational data. The analyses are based on data from the Austrian Labour Force Survey, which provides comprehensive information on current and potential previous employment.

Parallel Session IV

Friday 18 September 09:00 - 11:00

B1 Strikes, mobilisation and IR models in transition

09:00 - 11:00 · Room: Auditoriet · Chair: Bettina Stadler

Undermining workers' purchasing power: conditions and mechanisms explaining Belgium's high strike activity (1991–2025)

dr. Kurt Vandaele
European Trade Union Institute (ETUI), Brussels, Belgium

Over the past twenty years or so, Belgium has appeared as one of Europe's most strike-prone countries. Simultaneously, some countries with a strike-prone past, such as Italy and Greece, officially no longer collect data on strikes, whereas Spain has deliberately excluded some large strikes. While Belgium's strike level might thus be relatively lower in the rankings if all data were available, this elevated strike activity appears to reflect more than a data artefact resulting from gaps in comparative data. This paper explores why this is the case and centres on the use of political mass strikes, which are an enduring part of the workers' action repertoire in Belgium. Political mass strikes can be defined as large strikes against (announced) policies of political authorities and either take the form of general strikes, national days of strike action or large strikes in the public sector against the state as an employer. Based on quarterly data on the number of days not worked due to industrial action per 1,000 employees, the central research question is what explains ebbs and flows in strike activity in both the private and state-governed sector in Belgium between 1991 and 2025. This article therefore analyses the necessary and sufficient conditions via a fuzzy-set qualitative comparative analysis (QCA). Methodologically, the paper contributes by combining set-theoretic analysis with applied critical realism in industrial relations research, as the QCA results are interpreted through abductive reasoning to trace generative mechanisms. Drawing on the literatures on strike activity and on government power in political science, as well as substantive knowledge about Belgium's political economy, the following key findings are expected. First, multiple pathways will lead to a high strike level in both sectors, putting forward various combinations of the following conditions: coalition governments dominated by right-wing political parties, budgetary pressures inducing austerity measures, governmental intervention in wage-setting and specific legislative initiatives such as those initiating pension reforms. Second, causal asymmetry is expected with regards to the conditions associated with non-high strike levels, including, for instance, the absence of pension reforms or budgetary pressures, which are both especially associated with caretaker government phases. The paper's theoretical contribution lies in integrating political and economic explanations. In doing so, it situates shop-floor dynamics within the interplay of the government's composition and agenda-setting power, budgetary pressures introducing austerity measures, restrictions on free collective bargaining and legislative initiatives, overall undermining workers' purchasing power and decommodification from market pressures.

Politicization and tertiarization of strikes in Italy after 2008

Prof MARGHERITA SABRINA PERRA[1], Prof. Katia Pilati[2]
[1]University of Cagliari, Cagliari, Italy. [2]University of Trento, Trento, Italy

This article provides an in-depth examination of strikes as the quintessential form of workers' contentious action, offering insights into the changes these actions have undergone between 2008 and 2023. Although the significance for workers, trade unions, and citizens has likely evolved over time, strikes represent the most important protest form in the labor/capital conflict and signal the mobilizing capacity of trade unions (Crouch 2017; Gumbrell-McCormick and Hyman 2018). Our contribute is to highlight some differences of current strikes from the strikes of the 1960s and 1970s (Tarrow, 1989) and, in line with the typology of labor actions, we propose a refined categorization of strikes, emphasizing their politicization and tertiarization. While the literature distinguishes among general and economic strikes, this differentiation has not been systematically explored, either from a theoretical standpoint or—largely due to the lack of comprehensive official data—from an empirical perspective aimed at explaining the trends of each type and their recent transformations. We argue that addressing this gap is particularly important, especially in light of the crisis years, during which the public sector experienced rising levels of conflict. These conflicts were largely attributable to structural

transformations affecting the sector since the 1990s, including changes in its functions, recruitment patterns, and modes of work organization.

Following the 2008 crisis, the politicization of labor actions has particularly affected general economic strikes in the public sector, which increasingly target the state at multiple territorial levels—municipal, regional, and national—not only in its role as regulator and policymaker, but above all as employer.

Using data drawn from an original protest-event analysis (PEA) of labor actions between 2008 and 2023 (N=12,928), this article aims to advance a better understanding of strikes to provide an interpretation for their changes. Special attention will then be given to public sector strikes in Italy, drawing on the only available official dataset on strikes in the country, provided by the Strike Guarantee Commission.

References

Crouch, C. (2017). Membership density and trade union power. Transfer: European Review of Labour and Research, 23(1), 47-61

Gumbrell McCormick, R. and Hyman, R. (2018). [Democracy in trade unions, democracy through trade unions?](https://ideas.repec.org/p/ehl/lserod/89230.html). [LSE Research Online Documents on Economics](https://ideas.repec.org/s/ehl/lserod.html) 89230, London School of Economics and Political Science, LSE Library.

Tarrow, S. (1989). Democracy and Disorder: Protest and Politics in Italy, 1965-1975. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Why employment relations matters for researching problems for labour in an age of polycrisis

Prof Tony Dobbins

University of Birmingham, Birmingham, United Kingdom

Why employment relations matters for researching problems for labour in an age of polycrisis

This conceptual paper abstract outlines why employment relations matter(s) for researching problems for labour in an age of global polycrisis. Originating with Morin and Kern (1999), the concept of polycrisis is vital for understanding contemporary turbulence and associated inequalities in work and employment relations (ER) (Dobbins et al, 2026). This requires exploring how overlapping economic, health, climate, geopolitical, social and technological crises interact and impact ER. From the 2008 financial crisis to COVID-19, climate emergencies, geopolitical conflicts, and AI-driven change, the world of work is increasingly shaped by multiple crises and shocks. Increasingly, polycrisis exacerbates problems for labour, worldwide, including inequalities and fragmented labour markets.

The research question is: How does the polycrisis affect ER in countries across the world? Evidently, from reviewing evidence, substantial country, institutional and actor variations evidently exist regarding the impacts of polycrisis on ER – notably between countries in the Global North and South. From this, it is possible to envision varieties of polycrisis and varieties of implications for ER, and to present a variety of scenarios and institutional and actor responses (which may exacerbate polycrisis as well as address it).

Drawing on theories of political economy, the paper contributes to ER research and scholarship by providing a multi-level conceptual framework to analyse the implications of polycrisis on ER globally. It uncovers the dialectics and contradictions between polycrisis and protective Polanyian counter-movement responses. Notably, there is an acute contradiction and tension between the relentless drive for capital accumulation, on the one hand, and the necessity of social reproduction, on the other. Polycrisis reflects what Nancy Fraser (2023: xv) calls 'cannibal capitalism' – a 'general crisis of the entire societal order' in which various 'calamities converge, exacerbating one another and threatening to swallow us whole'. However, it plays out in different ways in different countries, shaped by particular institutional contexts and actor responses.

References

Dobbins, T., Cooke, F.L., Prouska, R., Williams, S., O'Brady, S. (2026, forthcoming). Theorizing Implications for Employment Relations in an Age of Polycrisis. Perspective article, British Journal of Industrial Relations.

Fraser, N. (2023) Cannibal Capitalism, London: Verso Books.

Morin, E. and Kern, A.B. (1999). Homeland Earth: A Manifesto for the New Milennium. Cresskill, New Jersey: Hampton Press.

Struggles for Power and the Sources of Authority in Employment Relations

Professor Bernd Brandl, Professor Barbara Bechter
Durham University, Durham, United Kingdom

The history of employment relations is also a history of struggles for power. The employment relations as such can be seen as struggle between capital and labour for power and it has also seen shifting power relations. This paper focuses on the different sources and the role and function of authority and leadership as one important basis of interest representation and the governance of work and labour. In this paper, we argue that changing power and authority is an inherent characteristic of employment relations and the evolution and transformation of authority and power shows a deterministic pattern. Against that background, an investigation of past transformations in authority of employment relations actors and organizations can not only augment our understanding of change in employment relations in general, but also allows us to understand current change in turbulent times. Methodologically, we analyse the role of authority and power in employment relations from a collective actors' focus as well as from an individual or personal level. We will also argue that the latter, is less analyzed in employment relations literature even though examples from history show that it is of utmost importance to understand change. Theoretically, we embed our analysis in a Weberian framework, which includes the social context within which different forms of authority and leadership develop. We use typical historical and current cases to support our arguments.

Varieties of Regional Industrial Relations in the European Union

Dr Christian Welz[1], Dr Peter Kerckhofs[2]
[1]Eurofound (retired), Dublin, Ireland. [2]Eurofound, Dublin, Ireland

The European model of industrial relations operates through an interconnected "web of rules" (Dunlop, 1958) that spans from local governments to the European Union. Although Member States still hold onto unique traditions rooted in their own histories, territorial relations are evolving as national governments lose their exclusive grip on major policy decisions.

Instead of being treated as an isolated theoretical domain, the regional level is best understood as one tier within a broader, multi-level industrial relations system (Marginson and Sisson, 2006). The concept of 'regional' industrial relations is not a monolith. Rather, it reflects a heterogeneous landscape of subnational entities, including states, provinces, counties, metropolitan hubs, and local authorities, that can be considered as economic ecosystems in which industrial relations actors can take up different roles.

Regional industrial relations have not been addressed as a research strand since the late 1990s (Teague, 1995; Regalia, 1998). This paper aims to fill this gap by pursuing the following research questions: who are the actors and which are the key processes of reginal industrial relations; what are the themes and issues currently addressed at regional level; which are the contextual factors impacting on the regionalization of industrial relations; have structures of interregional or cross-border cooperation emerged linked to regional industrial relations? In doing so, the paper is rooted in the paradigm of multi-level industrial relations. In the coming years attention to regional industrial relations will become more important in the implementation of the next European Multi Annual Financial Framework, since National Regional Partnership Plans will need to be drawn up in each EU Member State as to how European resources will be distributed among the Member States and the regional authorities within them.

From a methodological approach, the paper will recur to a qualitative review of academic literature and policy documents. Based on a questionnaire completed by Eurofound's national correspondents on industrial relations developments in 2025, information has been gathered on several aspects related to regional industrial relations settings. In addition, information on regional industrial relations was included in the Eurofound 2023 cross-industry representativeness study. As one outcome, a classification of variations in regional industrial relations will be drawn up, allowing for an overview of all 27 EU Member States plus Norway.

Power Sharing or Window Dressing? The Role of Social Partners in the Governance of Public Employment Services and Social Security

Maria Sedlakova, Victoria Cojocariu

Eurofound, Dublin, Ireland

This paper presents a comparative analysis of the role of social partners in the governance of national Public Employment Services (PES) and social security institutions (SSIs) across the 27 EU Member States and Norway. Building on extensive literature review, national-level analytical mapping conducted by the Network of Eurofound Correspondents in each of the 28 countries, complemented by a selection of case studies, the study examines whether and how trade unions and employer organisations are integrated into governance structures, the extent and nature of their influence, and how their involvement has evolved over the past decade.

The research analyses formal and informal channels of social partner participation, their mandates within tripartite or expert bodies, and their involvement in strategic decision-making, policy development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. It also assesses the perception of PES and SSIs' management on the added value, strengths and challenges of social partner involvement. Moreover, the paper explores the extent to which their involvement helps addressing labour market fragmentation, widening inequalities, and new forms of risk affecting diverse groups of workers.

Preliminary findings indicate substantial cross-national variation: in some industrial relations systems social partners remain deeply integrated into formal governance structures with decision-making powers, in others their involvement remains ad hoc, consultative, or fragmented. These differences reflect broader trends in industrial relations, including the reconfiguration of corporatist arrangements, the emergence of hybrid governance models, and the uneven capacity of collective institutions to influence policy trajectories.

The study highlights key challenges such as fragmented governance in systems with multiple SSIs, uneven availability of management perspectives, and the complexity of roles across different governance levels. It also highlights areas for further investigation, including potential contribution of social partners to effective labour market integration in a rapidly evolving world of work, and how their involvement can complement the role of the state in designing and implementing inclusive labour market policies.

By providing a first systemic cross-national mapping of social partner involvement in the governance of PES and SSIs, this work contributes to a deeper understanding of the institutional dynamics addressing new inequalities which shape the labour market and social protection systems in Europe and offers evidence to inform future policy debates on participatory governance models.

F2 Labour market segmentation, dualisation and inequality

09:00 - 11:00 · Room: Nord · Chair: TBC

A Worldwide Ficticious Work Normality?

Professor emer. Ulrich Mueckenberger

Bremen university, Bremen, Germany

The paper develops patterns ("types") of employment regulation in nearly all countries of the world. The project "Worlds of Labour. Coverage and Generosity of Employment Law", in its "Worlds of Labour"-data base, collected and coded employment regulation data from 153 countries of the world. The focus was: In how far do employment laws contribute to labour market segmentation, in how far do they counteract segmentation, via egalitarian norms? The data-base provides quantitative large-n normative data over time ("leximetrics"-methodology), as a precondition of a comparative perspective.

Two diverging and sequential patterns exist in the landscape of de jure-employment law.

- The segmenting one, follows the "labour-centred and gendered" path of societal reproduction which originated in Europe in the context of capitalist industrialisation. It developed early along with capitalist societies and cumulated, in the democratic period, and manifested itself in the status-protecting and gender-segmenting archetype of "Standard Employment Relationship" (SER). It has as dominant characteristic that seniority / ancienneté / Betriebszugehörigkeit of commodified work is accepted as decisive criterion of legal shelter. Due to the hegemony of developed European states (through trade, colonialism, value chains, international organisations, epistemic communities etc.) it widely diffused over the world, however, in a largely ficticious manner, neglecting diversities of work cultures and labour economics, legal pluralism and social needs of the countries of the world.

- The egalitarian pattern of employment regulation follows needs for societal reproduction, in an equal rather than segmenting manner. It provides human beings means for their livelihood on the basis of egalitarian human rights rather than of seniority. This regulatory pattern emerges later than the segmenting one and as a reaction to the former. Its emergence coincides with the worldwide rise of women's voice and the voice of Global South in global norm-setting.

- Today, both patterns coexist and compete with one another. The first one, however, has not lost its dominance – the second one, hence, struggles for full recognition.

The year of reference for our perspective on the two mentioned regulatory patters is 2022. In the interpretation of these data, I frequently go back to the years 1995 and 1970, sometimes even farther back into the history of countries and their legal orders.

Reference: Mückenberger, Ulrich, Fechner, Heiner, and Dingeldey, Irene (eds.) (2025): Constructing Worlds of Labour. Coverage and Generosity of Labour Law as Outcomes of Regulatory Social Policy, London et al.: Palgrave/Macmillan (Open Access).

Severe Labour Exploitation as a Structural Feature of Segmented Labour Markets: Evidence from Germany

Dr. Rene Boehme

University, Bremen, Germany

In 2023, a group of parcel delivery workers in Northern Germany filed claims for unpaid wages after working for months without pay through a subcontractor that subsequently disappeared. In the cleaning sector, investigations have revealed systematic wage violations, misleading recruitment practices, and opaque employment conditions. Similar patterns have been reported in construction and infrastructure projects, where workers face withheld wages, excessive working hours, and intimidation.

Rather than isolated incidents, this paper argues that such cases point to a broader structural development: the emergence of severe labour exploitation as a persistent feature of contemporary labour markets.

The paper conceptualises severe labour exploitation as a distinct segment within modern labour markets, characterised by the systematic erosion of labour rights, weak enforcement, and heightened worker vulnerability. Building on segmentation theory and the concept of social rights, exploitation is understood as the extreme pole of precarious employment—where formal protections exist but are effectively suspended in practice.

Empirically, the paper draws on a nationwide survey of 116 advisory organisations supporting workers affected by labour exploitation in Germany. This perspective allows for a systematic reconstruction of patterns that remain largely invisible in official statistics. The findings suggest that severe exploitation is concentrated in labour-intensive, low-regulation sectors and disproportionately affects migrant and mobile workers. While official crime statistics report only a few dozen cases annually, the study estimates between 100,000 and 200,000 cases per year, pointing to a substantial hidden population.

The analysis identifies four key mechanisms that enable and stabilise exploitation: (1) limited access to legal enforcement due to procedural barriers and unequal access to justice; (2) fragmented and under-resourced labour inspection systems; (3) migration-related dependencies that structurally weaken workers' bargaining power; and (4) a fragmented and precarious support infrastructure that limits effective intervention.

The paper contributes to debates on labour market inequality by demonstrating that exploitation is not merely a deviation from regulated employment, but embedded in the institutional architecture of contemporary labour markets. It highlights the need to move beyond individualised enforcement approaches and address the structural conditions that allow exploitation to persist.

The Greater Region around Luxembourg: Discrimination and Convergence in Social Policy and the Labour Market

Dr Franz Clément

LISER, Esch-sur-Alzette, Luxembourg

The area known as the "Greater Region" is located around Luxembourg. It is composed of that country, several Belgian federal entities, two German Länder, as well as the former Lorraine Region in France. Luxembourg welcomes 220,000 cross-border workers every day, representing 46% of the salaried workforce of this small country.

The attractiveness exerted by Luxembourg over neighbouring regions, due to its significantly higher wages and very advantageous social security benefits, creates distortions at the borders, particularly in terms of employment and social security. One can point to the difficulties faced by French border municipalities in implementing social policies because of funding problems caused by their cross-border residents paying income tax in Luxembourg. It is also observed that hospitals located near the borders are regularly deprived of staff because of Luxembourg's pull factor. Furthermore, cross-border workers employed in Luxembourg can only benefit from Luxembourgish social assistance on the condition that they carry out certain activities on Luxembourg territory.

The issue of unemployment must also be noted: a cross-border worker who loses their job in Luxembourg will receive unemployment benefits at the rate of their country of residence rather than at the Luxembourg rate. Discrimination can also be observed among cross-border workers themselves, as many policies are conducted bilaterally, on a case-by-case basis, between Luxembourg and each neighbouring country individually. Since 2003, Belgium has benefited from a tax revenue redistribution mechanism allowing its border municipalities to implement social policies, whereas this is not the case for France or Germany. The same applies to teleworking (remote work) arrangements, as negotiations vary from one country to another.

Our proposal aims to describe the reality of these problems and discriminations, and to demonstrate their impact on social and labour policies. It will also show that the authorities of Luxembourg's neighboring countries, as well as citizens' associations, attempt to achieve progress but are hindered by the centralized French political system, unlike the Belgian and German federal entities, which possess international powers.

Finally, the proposal will suggest the establishment of a minimum international treaty designed to better take into account the social and labor policies of the regions bordering Luxembourg by granting their political authorities certain limited competences.

Privatisation of Municipally Owned Corporations in Finland: Effects on Workers' Wages and Employment in an Eight-Year Follow-Up Study

Niklas Mäkinen, Dr. Satu Pyöriä
Work Research Centre, Tampere, Finland

Nordic countries are widely recognised for their ability to generate and sustain high-quality employment in the labour market. One important factor behind the success of the Nordic employment regime is the central role of the public sector as an employer. This has sheltered workers from market pressures and international competition and their potentially deteriorating impact on job quality. Furthermore, publicly controlled and owned workplaces are not limited to government agencies and public institutions but also include state- and municipally owned corporations that provide public services or sell goods and services on the market. As public employers, they carry significant responsibility for ensuring fair employment terms, good working conditions, and the well-being of their employees.

In the past decade or so, however, the public sector in the Nordic countries has undergone significant structural and institutional change. Fiscal pressures, market liberalisation, and ideological shifts have intensified the privatisation of public services and publicly owned corporations, often driven by the pursuit of greater efficiency and cost-effectiveness. There are widely shared concerns that this may have adverse consequences for workers in terms of job losses, lower wages, and worse working conditions.

Against this background, this study examines how the privatisation of publicly owned corporations has affected workers' labour market outcomes, particularly earnings and employment. We focus on municipality-owned corporations (MOCs) in Finland, where their number has increased rapidly in recent years. The analysis draws on comprehensive administrative data covering all MOC privatisations that took place between 1997 and 2014. Using a quasi-experimental difference-in-differences design, we estimate both short- and long-term impacts of privatisation over an eight-year period.

Our findings show that privatisation increases employees' risk of unemployment and may lead to substantial income losses. These negative effects persisted throughout the eight-year follow-up period. The results

suggest that privatisation decisions at the local government level should not be guided solely by organisational performance or cost efficiency. Policymakers must also consider the significant implications such decisions have for workers' economic and social security.

Reshaping Labour Market Segmentation in the Elderly Care Sector in Greece

Professor Maria Karamessini, MSc Marilena Kelantonaki, MSc Voula Touri
Panteion University, Athens, Greece

The Greek long-term care system remains familistic in its rationale and residual regarding public provision. Family members, mostly wives and daughters, are the main providers of (unpaid) long-term elderly care, since municipalities deliver home care only to low-income dependent elderly who live alone, and either have no family or cannot be looked after by relatives or friends. Moreover, residential services are only private and cover a tiny share of the elderly in need of care, while the "migrant-in-the-family model" is more widespread, but it only meets the needs of well-off households since care benefits are nonexistent.

Before the 2010 sovereign debt crisis, the Greek elderly care sector was characterised by a highly segmented labour market, given the diversity of care providers (public/private) and the fragmentation of its workforce (formal/informal, migrant/native, low/medium/high-skilled workers). Today, sixteen years later, segmentation has attenuated. Insistent austerity policies have weakened the public/private sector divide in employment and working conditions, while the low relative wages in the private business and household sectors are responsible for labour shortages, exacerbated by reduced immigration of low-skilled and increased out-migration of skilled care labour.

Labour shortages are reshaping employment and working conditions and labour market segmentation in the elderly care sector. High labour mobility of nurses and personal carers towards the health sector is putting pressure on wages in the private elderly care sector. Moreover, the unavailability of live-in migrants is driving wages up and limiting exploitative practices in the informal household sector.

The paper maps labour market segmentation in the Greek elderly care sector by outlining the wages, employment and working conditions and industrial relations in the different segments of the sector, studies the determinants of labour/skills shortages and their determinants and discusses labour mobility flows and their impact in reshaping labour market segmentation in the sector. It is based on data from official administrative sources and the findings of (a) ten semi-structured interviews with representatives of labour unions, municipalities, residential homes of the private sector/the Church of Greece/foundations (b) thirty in depth interviews with privately paid live-in and/or live-out home care workers, (c) three focus groups with eighteen care workers in public and private elderly care structures (d) two interviews with managers of care platforms.

Working-Time Constraints, Gender and Multiple Jobholding in Australia

Inga Kristoffersen, Alison Preston
The University of Western Australi, Australia

This paper examines the determinants of multiple jobholding (MJH) in Australia, with a focus on how job quality and working-time arrangements shape the likelihood of holding more than one job across gender and age groups. While MJH is often interpreted as a response to financial need, we ask whether it is more fundamentally driven by constraints embedded in primary jobs—particularly limitations in hours, scheduling, and employment arrangements—and how these constraints vary across the life course.

The paper contributes to debates on job quality and labour market segmentation by shifting attention from individual motivations toward the structural features of employment that give rise to MJH. In doing so, it highlights how gendered patterns of work organisation—especially in sectors characterised by part-time, casual and variable hours—shape labour supply behaviour and contribute to differences in employment outcomes.

We use data from the Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) Survey over the period 2001–2024. The latter is a longitudinal household survey. The analysis combines descriptive evidence with multivariate models to distinguish between cross-sectional associations and within-person changes over time. The empirical approach allows us to examine how both observed characteristics and changes in individuals' circumstances are associated with transitions into and out of MJH.

The results show that MJH is a persistent but uneven feature of the Australian labour market, with higher incidence among women and younger workers—young women, in particular. Across all groups, constraints on hours in the primary job emerge as the strongest and most consistent correlate of MJH. Employment arrangements also play a key role: casual work, self-employment and employment in sectors with fragmented or non-standard working-time structures are all associated with a higher likelihood of holding multiple jobs. Within-person estimates confirm that increases in primary job hours and improvements in work–family balance are associated with reductions in MJH, suggesting that secondary jobs often function as an adjustment to limitations in primary employment.

Overall, the findings indicate that MJH reflects not only financial pressures but also the organisation of work, particularly the availability and scheduling of hours in primary jobs. These patterns are especially pronounced for women, pointing to the importance of gendered job structures in shaping labour market outcomes. The results have implications for how job quality is conceptualised and measured, and for policy debates concerning working-time regulation, employment security, and labour market mobility.

G2 Skill formation, training and lifelong learning

09:00 - 11:00 · Room: Sør · Chair: Kjersti Misje Østbakken

The Changing Distribution and Intensity of Workplace Training and Skill Development in the UK (2008–2025)

Mr Michael Francis

University of Manchester, Manchester, United Kingdom

Workplace training in the UK has undergone major transformations since the mid-2000s over a volatile period of recession (2008-2009), austerity (2015-2019) and the Pandemic (2020-2021). In particular, research in the 2010s revealed declines in public and private training investment per employee (Mason and Bishop, 2015), as well as a reduction in average training hours (Green et al., 2016). Recently, however, the impact of recent economic cuts, shocks and technological change on both the distribution and intensity of training has received little academic attention; this article aims to address these empirical gaps.

On a theoretical level, economic approaches to training analysis often assume a linear relationship with wages and progression via stable skill development. Empirical evidence in the UK, however, suggests that training opportunities (distribution and intensity) are highly segmented by gender, occupational class, and the industrial organisation of production, necessitating a more structural approach instead.

To identify and evaluate these structural factors a variance decomposition approach is used to examine training opportunities over three pooled time periods: 1 (2011-2013), 2 (2017-2019) and 3 (2023-2025) using the UK Quarterly Labour Force Survey. The UK Household Longitudinal Survey (UKHLS) is also used to provide within-person comparison. These structural factors are then contrasted with personal and family characteristics, and organisational and job characteristics.

Second, these three groups of factors are then applied to analyse training intensity in the labour market, i.e., the hours required to gain skills through training. Here, the structural factors are compared with the composition of the training episode itself, particularly whether the training is formally recognised (qualification), funded by the employer, completed online or off-the-job. Essentially, this allows us to analyse training opportunities on two levels, firstly who gets training, and secondly who gets what type of training.

Preliminary findings suggest that industrial and occupational class categories remain important pivotal in determining training opportunities than in the 2010s, with a strong role for the public sector and unionisation. On-the-other-hand, formally recognised training qualifications, off-the-job training, and greater investment from employers is becoming more critical in ensuring more intensive higher-quality training for employees. Lastly, training hours have become more unequal across occupational groups when nested in sectors despite the overall distribution remaining consistent, suggesting a divergence in the quality of training opportunities.

References available upon request.

Do qualifications still matter? Migrants, job quality and labour market mobility in Poland

Dr Horacy Dębowski[1,2], Weronika Idzikowska[1], Dr Wojciech Stęchły[1,3], Dr Jan Czarzasty[1]
[1]SGH Warsaw School of Economics, Warsaw, Poland. [2]Central Examination Board, Warsaw, Poland. [3]Educational Research Institute - National Research Institute, Warsaw, Poland

This paper examines whether, and to what extent, "formal qualifications" continue to matter for migrants' labour market integration. Research on skills recognition usually assumes that credentials facilitate access to employment and support integration, especially for migrants (Taylor, 1994; Webb, 2015). Qualifications are also central to VET systems: they shape training content, structure skill formation and define occupational boundaries, often through social dialogue involving employers, trade unions and public authorities (Busemeyer & Trampusch, 2012; Thelen, 2005). However, the growing "skills-first" agenda suggests that employers may place less weight on certificates and more on demonstrable competences, regardless of how these were acquired (World Economic Forum, 2023; Milana et al., 2025).

Poland provides a particularly instructive context for this analysis: it has recently become a major destination for migration and displays relatively high employment rates among migrants, pointing to strong labour-market absorption. However, it lacks a coherent institutional framework for recognising migrants' prior vocational skills and qualifications. Consequently, migrants seeking formal certification must follow the same routes as nationals, which may increase their risk of deskilling, occupational downgrading and lower pay.

Against this background, we focus on the beauty sector, a female-dominated area of service work. The sector is analytically revealing because it is only partially regulated: entry into much of it does not require a state-recognised qualification, so the labour-market value of qualifications is shaped largely by employers' hiring strategies. At the same time, the sector is notable for its popularity among migrant learners: in post-secondary education (EQF levels 4 and 5), foreign nationals account for around one quarter of enrolments in these programmes, whose completion requires 1.5 to 2 years of study and success in externally standardised examinations conducted in Polish.

The analysis draws on qualitative interviews with adult learners, employers and VET school principals conducted by the authors within the Horizon Europe project Skills4Justice, combined with administrative data from the Central Examination Board on migrant participation in post-secondary vocational education and national examinations.

The analysis is framed by an institutional labour market segmentation perspective, informed by theories of social closure and credentialism (Piore 1979, De Haas, 2021). It reveals why migrant women invest in obtaining Polish qualifications that require a substantial commitment of time, training and examination effort in a sector often portrayed as relatively open and increasingly skills-based, and how such qualifications shape access to employment, job quality, working conditions and labour market mobility.

Converting Sport-Authorised Competence Into Workplace Credibility Under Ableist Doxa

Dr Neve Abgeller
University of Birmingham, Birmingham, United Kingdom

This paper examines how visually impaired professionals pursue recognition across two misaligned fields—organisational work and elite visually impaired (VI) cricket—whose evaluative logics do not easily translate into one another. While disability inclusion is often framed through accommodation, policy, or individual adjustment, such approaches tend to leave intact the deeper classificatory assumptions through which competence, legitimacy, and professionalism are recognised in the first place. In response, this study reconceptualises inclusion as a problem of recognition and valuation. Drawing on Bourdieu's relational sociology, it treats legitimacy not as a stable personal attribute but as a field effect: what counts as credible competence depends on locally sanctioned norms, doxic expectations, and the uneven distribution of symbolic resources. From this perspective, ableism is understood not as an episodic barrier but as a structured logic of recognisability that shapes whose competence can appear believable at work.

Empirically, the paper is based on an ethnographic case study of a nationally successful VI cricket team competing in the top division of the Blind Cricket England and Wales league. The study combines participant observation, interviews, and focus groups with players who also hold full-time professional roles across a range of sectors. This multi-sited design makes it possible to trace how competence is authorised, stabilised, and contested across sport and work, and to analyse what happens when standing secured in one field encounters a different regime of value in another.

The analysis develops three interconnected arguments. First, it shows how ableist workplace doxa structures recognisability by positioning visually impaired professionals as perpetually required to demonstrate, translate, and defend their legitimacy. The burden of legibility is displaced onto disabled actors themselves. Second, it conceptualises elite VI cricket as a field of valuation in which competence is authorised through competitive seriousness, disciplined practice, collective standards, and consecrating mechanisms. In this context, recognition is anchored in validated performance rather than deficit. Third, the paper theorises movement between sport and work not as straightforward transfer but as conversion under mismatched regimes of value. Symbolic standing accumulated in cricket does not travel automatically into employment settings; instead, it must be actively re-keyed into workplace-credible forms under unequal exchange rates of recognition.

The paper contributes to organisation studies by reframing disability inclusion as a field-sensitive problem of valuation, convertibility, and legitimacy. More broadly, it offers a mechanism-based account of how competence is made believable, withheld, or rendered fragile across social worlds.

From University to Work: Health Consequences of Education and Employment Transitions and the Role of Psychosocial Resources

Julia Fritzsche

University of Rostock, Rostock, Germany

The transition from higher education to employment constitutes a pivotal life-course passage in young adulthood, involving substantial changes in social roles, institutional contexts, daily routines, and economic conditions. From a life-course perspective, such transitions represent biographical turning points at which opportunities, risks, and social inequalities may be reconfigured and accumulate over time. Health sociological research further suggests that transitional periods are often characterized by uncertainty, instability, and heightened performance demands, potentially undermining physical and mental health. Despite extensive research on school-to-work transitions, empirical evidence specifically addressing the higher-education-to-work transition remains limited, particularly regarding its dynamic nature and the moderating role of psychosocial resources.\ This study pursues two objectives. First, it examines whether and to what extent the transition from higher education to employment is associated with changes in young adults' subjective health, distinguishing between pre-transition, transition, and post-transition phases. Second, it investigates whether psychosocial resources moderate these health trajectories. External resources are operationalized as social belonging, reflecting perceived social integration, while internal resources are captured by the Big Five personality traits.\ The analysis draws on longitudinal data from Starting Cohort 5 of the German National Educational Panel Study (NEPS), including 73,095 observations from 7,183 individuals aged 35 or younger, observed through 2022. Subjective health, the dependent variable, is measured annually using a five-point self-rated health scale. A three-stage trajectory variable models the education-to-work transition. Random-effects panel regression models with interaction terms are estimated to assess within- and between-individual variation, controlling for gender, age, household size, and potential health resources.\ The findings reveal a significant decline in subjective health during the transition to employment, with deterioration becoming more pronounced after labor market entry. Social belonging emerges as a robust protective factor, substantially buffering health declines, particularly in the post-transition phase. Conscientiousness and agreeableness also moderate post-transition health trajectories, whereas neuroticism is negatively associated with health overall but does not amplify transition-specific effects.\ Overall, the results underscore that entry into employment represents a health-sensitive life-course phase and highlight the critical role of psychosocial resources in fostering resilience during this transition.

Offering scholarships to adult skilled workers: Evidence from a field experiment

Bjorn Dapi[1], Nina Drange[2], Karen Evelyn Hauge[2], Tao Zhang[2]

[1]Fafo, Oslo, Norway. [2]Frisch Centre, Oslo, Norway

The current rapid pace of technological change shapes and stimulates the demand for a labor force that can continually update its skill set. Yet, despite the demand for lifelong learning, evidence across countries reveals that low-educated adults are underrepresented in adult education. We study the causal effect of financial

incentives on adult education participation using a field experiment with over 300,000 low-educated adults. Participants were randomly assigned to receive a 5,000 USD scholarship, educational information only, or no intervention. In the control group, 2.5% enrolled in education, and 1.7% completed at least one course 1 year later. The scholarship increased enrollment by 0.54 percentage points, a significant 20% increase, while information raised enrollment by 0.23 percentage points, a 9% increase, also significant. One year into enrollment in adult education, completion of at least one course significantly increased by 0.16 percentage points (a 9% increase) in the scholarship group compared to the control group. These results provide robust evidence that targeted scholarships can enhance lifelong learning and inform policies promoting adult skill development.

Beyond Access: The Role of Training Quality in Apprenticeships for Skills Development and Social Inequality

Kaja Reegård, Torgeir Nyen & Johan Røed Steen

Fafo, Oslo, Norway

Vocational Education and Training (VET) and apprenticeship systems are typically regarded as effective mechanisms for facilitating school-to-work transitions and supporting inclusive labour markets. However, less academic attention has been paid to variation in the quality of training within firms. Drawing on an ongoing research project at Fafo, the paper investigates the following research question: What promotes and constrains high-quality learning environments for apprentices, and how these conditions influence skill formation and early career trajectories?

Theoretically, the paper contributes to the literature on a twofold perspective on training environments, i.e., the professional-organisational dimension (access to varied and challenging work tasks and degree of autonomy and opportunities to apply one’s own skills and competences) and the social-cultural dimension (apprentices’ participation in social communities within the workplace and recognition and sense of belonging in the everyday work community).

In Norway, high completion rates and overall satisfaction among apprentices may obscure important differences across sectors, occupations, and types of training firms. The paper argues that such variation is critical for understanding inequalities in skill acquisition, job quality, and subsequent labour market mobility. Uneven access to structured training, supportive supervision, trade union representatives and meaningful work tasks may contribute to segmentation between apprentices who develop robust, transferable skills and those whose learning opportunities become more limited.

The paper combines qualitative interviews and quantitative analyses. The qualitative component includes in-depth interviews with apprentices, instructors, training offices, and union representatives in labour market sectors with contrasting training traditions, i.e., construction and retail. This provides insight into how apprentices experience their learning and working environments, including the balance between guidance and autonomy, the breadth and depth of work tasks, and integration into professional communities. The quantitative component builds on re-analyses of the Norwegian apprentice survey and a trade union representatives survey to map patterns of variation in training quality, completion, and satisfaction across sectors and over time.

The paper explores how recent policy changes, such as stricter requirements for the use of apprentices in public procurement, may have expanded access to apprenticeships while potentially introducing new quality challenges. By linking micro-level learning environments to broader labour market outcomes, the paper contributes to understanding how VET systems mediate the relationship between skills development, job quality, and social inequality. Among expected findings are that ensuring high-quality apprenticeship training is essential not only for individual skill formation, but also for sustaining equitable labour market mobility and preventing dualisation.

I1 Job quality: comparative and conceptual

09:00 - 11:00 · Room: Styrerommet · Chair: Sigurd Oppegaard

Job quality in Europe: what country regimes and what trends in the post-COVID era?

Christine ERHEL[1], Mathilde Guergoat-Larivière[2], Malo Mofakhami[3]
[1]CNAM, Paris, France. [2]Université de Lille, Lille, France. [3]Université Paris 13, Paris, France

Job quality debate in France has been developing over the last five years, following the COVID crisis and the observation that essential workers, who kept working on site during the pandemic, were facing low job quality (low wages, fragmented and atypical working hours, hard physical working conditions...). The heterogeneity of job quality by occupation was also highlighted by a report published in 2023, which confirmed that some low wage occupations were cumulating negative job quality features, but also showed that job quality issues concerned all types of occupations, including managers and professionals who suffer from high work intensity and stress (Donne et al, 2023). Finally, European comparisons on the basis of the European Working Conditions Survey showed that France exhibits relatively poor performance in terms of job quality, Piasna, 2023; Erhel et al, 2023).

However, such comparisons, mainly based on 2015 data, should be updated to take into account recent changes in labour market policy (flexibilization of labour law and increase in decentralization of collective bargaining since 2016, focus on individual training rights...), as well as the evolution in the labour market situation (decrease in unemployment and increase in labour market tightness since 2016) and some more structural trends (digitization and ecological transition).

In the present contribution, we will use to most recent comparable data (especially the 2024 EWCS but also LFS, structure of earnings and accidents at work data) to produce a taxonomy of EU countries according to their job quality level and characteristics. The analysis will be based on the multi-dimensional definition of job quality that was adopted in a European research project (QuInnE project, see Erhel, Guergoat-Larivière, 2016), and which includes six dimensions of job quality, i.e. wages, employment conditions, work conditions, training and education, work-life balance and collective representation. In terms of methodology, we use Principal Component Analysis (PCA) to analyze correlations between the various indicators and summarize existing information and hierarchical ascending classifications (HAC) to identify country clusters.

Beyond the composition of clusters and their relative outcomes, we will also analyze trends in job quality components using descriptive statistics and a synthetic index and see if job quality has improved across Europe, in times of improving labour market situation in most countries. The links between job quality outcomes and institutional reforms will be discussed. Our empirical analyses will be disaggregated by gender, education and occupations.

Job quality and the labor market for researchers in France: segmentation and trends

Pr Christine ERHEL[1], Pr Pierre COURTIOUX[2]
[1]CNAM, Paris, France. [2]De Vinci Higher Education, Paris, France

In the French case, recent work has shown that the labor market for researchers working in the private sector has undergone significant changes following the reform of the research tax credit (CIR) in 2008, which led to the subsidizing of researchers' wages, that may be included in declared R&D expenses.

Courtioux & Métivier (2026) show that this reform resulted in the rise of part-time research: the number of employed researchers increased, but the average time they devoted to research decreased, falling from approximately 90% full-time to around 60% on average. This significantly distinguishes the French case from the German case, which maintained a research time of around 90% for its researchers during the same period, and could explain the weaknesses of the French R&D ecosystem highlighted by several studies (Bozio et al., 2019; Bach et al., 2021).

Beyond the question of research time in the private sector, this paper aims to characterize more broadly the evolution of French scientific employment in terms of job quality, by exploring several dimensions analyzed in European and French job quality studies (wages, employment conditions, working hours; see Piana, 2023; Erhel and Guergoat-Larivière, 2023). The objective is to characterize the changes experienced by researchers in relation to those experienced by managers as a whole, distinguishing between two segments: the private sector and the public sector. Indeed, the economics of science tends to consider these as two interrelated segments of the scientific labor market (Stephan, 1996).

Based on the 2003-2019 Labour Force Surveys, we identify researchers within the broader category of managers and calculate various indicators to characterize job quality. We show that researchers, on average, have higher job quality than managers, but significant differences exist between the public and private sectors. Private sector researchers are better paid than managers, more often have permanent contracts, are less frequently working part-time, variable or atypical hours. However, these differences are not observed for public sector researchers, who appear significantly less favored in terms of job quality.

In terms of changes in job quality, the scientific job market appears to have become less attractive: researchers in both the private and public sectors are seeing their salaries decrease compared to those of other managers. Similarly, the proportion of fixed-term contracts is increasing more sharply than for other managers, with this trend being significantly more pronounced in the public sector.

Employee representatives' perceived influence on organizational decision-making

Simon Kuijpers-Heezemans[1], David de Kort[2], Sonja Bekker[2]

[1]University of Amsterdam, Amsterdam, Netherlands. [2]Utrecht University, Utrecht, Netherlands

In the Netherlands, organizations with more than 50 employees are legally required to install a works council (WC), while smaller organizations either have to (organizations with 10-50 employees) or may (10 or less employees) set up a staff representation (PvT). WCs and PvTs introduce employee representation on the organization level and aim to create an infrastructure through which employees can communicate their preferences and concerns to management (Jirjahn & Smith, 2018). When management takes employees' preferences and concerns into account during decision-making, WCs and PvTs may help improve the working conditions and job satisfaction of employees (e.g., Addisson et al., 2001; Bellmann et al., 2018; Eurofound, 2006). The existence of a WC or PvT alone, however, does not guarantee that they can exert influence over management decisions. The degree to which WCs and PvTs can influence management decision-making may be contingent on several factors. Previous work, for instance, suggests that communication between parties plays an important role. Van den Berg et al. (2025) show that WCs' perceived level of influence is shaped by their interaction with management, for example by the frequency of communication and the degree of information sharing between the two. In line with the works of Sapulete (2013, p. 163) and Wigboldus et al. (2016), we expect that WCs' and PvTs' perceived level of influence is also shaped by their communication with employees (their constituents). WCs and PvTs may, for example, experience a stronger mandate when they communicate with those they represent on a more frequent basis. Moreover, WCs and PvTs may gain more legitimacy with management when they can show that they go to greater lengths to accurately capture the preferences and concerns of employees. The communication between employees and employee representation remains empirically understudied, however. This paper therefore tests how communication with constituents shapes WCs and PvTs perceived influence on organizational decision-making. To do so, the paper draws on primary survey data gathered among members of WCs and PvTs in the Netherlands (N\>200). We consider two aspects of communication between WCs/PvTs and their constituents, taking into account both the frequency of communication and the type(s) of communication channels that WCs and PvTs use. The data also enables us to control for other relevant factors, such as the size of the organization and sector.

Job Quality in Ages of Technological Disruption: An Applied History Approach

Dr Benjamin Schneider[1], Dr Magdalena Soffia[2]

[1]University of Oslo, Oslo, Norway. [2]Institute for the Future of Work, London, United Kingdom

The quality of employment is increasingly recognized as a key aspect of human welfare (Green 2006, Findlay, Kalleberg et al. 2013), but there are growing concerns that technological changes such as automation and artificial intelligence may reshape work and degrade working conditions (Berg, Green et al. 2023). In this survey paper, we synthesize and compare long-run historical research and current studies that provide evidence on the relationship between technological shifts and job quality. We use carefully selected analogies between historical technological changes and current shifts, testing the validity of these parallels and using them to suggest possibilities for job quality in the future. Of current technologies, we consider algorithmic management, robotics and generative artificial intelligence, and suggest possible parallels in the form of Scientific Management (Taylorism), early industrial automation from the 1940s to the 1956s, and historical deskilling technologies. We identify several risks to the development of future job quality and note potential mediating forces that may preserve the quality of work.

Nurses' experiences in the context of shortages in Europe: problematic quality of work andfragmented voice

Prof. Dr. Vassil Kirov, Mina K. Kostova

Institute of Philosophy and Sociology, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, Sofia, Bulgaria

Labour and skills shortages have emerged as a systemic challenge across Europe, with nursing consistently identified as one of the professions facing the most critical staffing deficits (ELA, 2023). Drawing on the findings of the European comparative project SkilMeet (Skills for labour markets in the digital and green transition), this paper argues that nursing shortages are inextricably linked to the deteriorating quality of work (Holman, 2013). Furthermore, it contends that these issues are only partially addressed by institutional frameworks and industrial relations actors.

The study is based on over 50 semi-structured interviews conducted with nurses in Bulgaria, Germany, Luxembourg, and Poland between the autumn of 2025 and the spring of 2026. Utilizing a standardized research tool developed through commonly elaborated guidelines, the study facilitates a rigorous comparative analysis of empirical data across diverse socio-economic and institutional contexts.

The findings reveal a convergence of dissatisfaction regarding the quality of work across all four countries, though the specific drivers vary. These include: stagnating wages and unpaid overtime, poor work-life balance and high physical/mental strain, limited opportunities for professional development and lifelong learning. While strong intrinsic motivation and high occupational attachment act as compensatory factors, the research suggests that professional dedication is frequently exploited as a mechanism of management control.

Despite the severity of the shortage, institutional responses to improve work quality remain insufficient. The paper highlights a paradox in collective representation. In Germany and Luxembourg despite established traditions of collective bargaining and high coverage, nurses express an ambiguous attitude toward unions. While their role in securing agreements is recognized, many perceive them as ineffective when faced with rigid hospital budget constraints. In Bulgaria and Poland collective voice remains weak and fragmented, with trade unions exerting limited influence on systemic working conditions. Ultimately, the paper concludes that without a fundamental shift in how industrial relations actors prioritize the "quality of work" over mere "labour supply," the nursing crisis in Europe is likely to persist.

How to make the case for why quality of work matters?

Dr Mathew Johnson, Professor Jill Rubery

University of Manchester, Manchester, United Kingdom

This paper is a contribution towards developing the case for the recentring of work and employment within academic, policy and political debates. The aim is to counter deterministic discourses that regard society as having to adjust to either a workless or a precarious future, shaped by political, technological, and environmental forces beyond our control. These forces may be undermining the institutions and norms of good quality work on which advanced countries' stability, security and prosperity has been based. Conversely, the lack of progress in developing formal employment and decent work institutions has been a major barrier to development in the Global South.

This recentring of debates is needed simply because responding after changes to work have already happened may be too late. That this topic continues to be marginalised within academic, policy and political debates reflects a perception that the decline of trade union power allows policymakers no longer to concern themselves with work and employment issues. This approach, however, fails to understand how far the structures and assumptions on which policy and politics are built are predicated on the maintenance of decent work for the majority, even if individual workers have limited power to defend their access to, and conditions at, work.

This paper is part of an ambitious project to bring together interdisciplinary research on work and employment through a new network of work and employment research centres (WorkNet International) aimed at increasing awareness of the multifaceted importance of work and employment. The proposed paper focuses on developing frameworks for exploring the complex impacts of changes to work and employment at macro, meso and more micro levels of analysis. We focus, for example, on implications for macroeconomic and fiscal stability (such as increasing mismatches between social protection and social policy and fiscal capacity if formal employment declines); on the interactions between production and social reproduction (and the attendant social risks and gender inequalities of not making these connections more visible); and how access to good quality work and employment across the life course is critical for individuals' well-being and their capacities to lead productive lives (thereby requiring a new emphasis on lifelong learning to reduce risks of exclusion due to accelerated technological change). The aim is to identify how current arrangements need to be protected and supported but also how they could be reformed to extend decent work opportunities.

D1 Platform work: regulation, status and social protection

09:00 - 11:00 · Room: Machiavelli · Chair: Sophie Banasiak

Fragile mobilisations: Collective action and the possibilities of organising in platform work in Slovakia

Dr. Adam Šumichrast

Central European Labour Studies Institute, Bratislava, Slovakia

This paper examines the dynamics of collective action in platform work in Slovakia, with a focus on the on-demand transport and delivery sector. It asks how platform workers attempt to organise and mobilise collectively, and what forms these mobilisations take in practice.

The paper contributes to the emerging field on collective action in the gig economy by analysing platform worker protests in a context of weak industrial relations institutions. Building on recent literature (e.g. Alex Wood; Valerio De Stefano; Wilkinson et. al.), it conceptualises platform mobilisation as shaped by structural constraints such as workforce fragmentation, self-employment status, and algorithmic management, alongside new digitally mediated forms of coordination that enable rapid but often short-term collective action.

At the same time, the paper situates these developments within the broader landscape of industrial relations and social dialogue in Slovakia. It examines the positions and strategies of key actors, including trade unions, employer organisations, and platform companies, in relation to platform work and its regulation. Particular attention is paid to the ongoing implementation of the EU Platform Work Directive and its potential to open new spaces for collective representation and organising, as well as its limits. Issues of access to social protection are considered as part of this wider institutional and regulatory context.

Empirically, the analysis focuses on recent protest attempts among drivers and couriers in Slovakia, including strike initiatives and online mobilisation efforts. The study draws on qualitative interviews with workers, trade unions, platform representatives, and public authorities, complemented by analysis of policy developments and digital communication spaces.

The Slovak case highlights how emerging forms of collective action interact with weakly institutionalised social dialogue, pointing to both new opportunities and persistent barriers for organising in platform work.

Platform Workers and Access to Social Protection: Asymmetric Europeanization and the Limits of Social Dialogue

Davide Falcomatà[1], Marta Kahancová[2,1]

[1]Comenius University, Bratislava, Slovakia. [2]Central European Labour Studies Institute, Bratislava, Slovakia

(Stream 2) European labour markets have seen a steady expansion of platform work over the past decade, with food-delivery couriers and ride-hailing drivers emerging as the most visible groups of contractually flexible workers. This paper examines how social dialogue, as a process anchored in industrial relations institutions, shapes platform workers' access to social protection. Empirically, the paper distinguishes between the weak and under-institutionalized industrial relations regime of Georgia, an EU candidate country, and several EU Member States. These include coordinated bargaining systems in older EU member states, represented by Austria and Sweden, and a fragmented, pluralist setting in a newer EU member state, represented by Slovakia.

Specifically, the paper asks how social partners in Georgia attempt to secure access to social protection for platform workers, and why successful unionization has failed to deliver any meaningful social protection gains. The Georgian case is particularly important because platform workers in food delivery and ride-hailing successfully established trade unions in 2024, supported by the Georgian Trade Union Confederation, marking a significant milestone in a country characterized by low bargaining coverage and fragmented social dialogue.

In response to the above questions, a particularly relevant conceptual dimension for Georgia is Europeanisation. As an EU candidate country, Georgia is increasingly exposed to European legal standards, policy debates, and donor-supported capacity building. The EU Platform Work Directive and broader EU discussions on employment status, algorithmic management, and social protection may therefore shape the strategies of Georgian trade unions and policymakers even in the absence of formal legal transposition.

Drawing on power resources theory, and the literature on contractual flexibility, platform unionism and Europeanization, this paper hypothesizes that the narrow legalistic approach adopted by Georgian trade unions can be reconducted to the broader European debate on platform work and on the EU Platform Directive, but that – on the other hand – this has not been matched by a discussion on the development and Europeanization of social protection and welfare infrastructure.

The findings – and particularly the cases of Slovakia and Georgia – suggest that weak and fragmented industrial relations systems have more difficulty moving from recognized employment status towards effective social protection. Theoretically, the paper contributes to debates on platform work by highlighting the importance of industrial relations for reconciling an existing social protection infrastructure with legal advancements informed by EU-level frameworks. The paper follows a qualitative research design, drawing on document analysis and original semi-structured interviews with social partner representatives.

Profiles and income of platform workers in Finland

Dr. Merja Kauhanen[1], Dr. Aart-Jan Riekhoff[2], Dr. Susanna Sten-Gahmberg[2]

[1]Labour Institute for Economic Research Labore, Helsinki, Finland. [2]The Finnish Centre for Pensions, Helsinki, Finland

Motivation: Technological change is one of the megatrends transforming labour market. It has led to new forms of work organization such as platform work. This form of employment transforms traditional employment relationships and the organisation of work. Despite a growing literature providing a more empirically grounded account of platform work there is still paucity of information about the prevalence of platform work, the number of workers involved, their individual and job characteristics, the diversity of the phenomenon and its income consequences.

Objective and contribution: The aim of the paper is to provide new, representative evidence concerning Finland on platform workers and their characteristics, examine their income status, and assess the role that platform work plays in their overall earned income, while accounting for heterogeneity among platform workers. We also investigate platform workers' autonomy to set their working conditions.

Methods: The data used is based on individual-level pilot survey data on digital platform employment of resident population aged 15-64 combined with the full Finnish labour force survey dataset from year 2022 and selected income variables from individual-level Finnish register data. Analysis methods include kernel density functions, probit and multinomial logit models.

Results: Our preliminary findings show that that foreign background, young age, high education, self-employment but also low income status the previous year are associated with the higher probability to do platform work in Finland. By type of platform work foreign background and urban place of residence is significantly associated with a higher probability of onsite platform work but not with the probability of online platform work. Majority of platform workers do platform work as self-employed in Finland and platform work is not their main source of income. More than half of employed platform workers earn below the national median income. The distributions of earned income show that there is a more concentration of low earners among those platform workers for whom platform work is the main job rather than a secondary job.