

Sessione 14

Industrial relations to the tests of crisis and emergency

Organizers: Sabrina Colombo (Università di Milano), Lisa Dorigatti (Università di Milano), Guglielmo Meardi (Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa), Roberto Pedersini (Università di Milano)

Abstract

Although with different national trajectories, the European Social Model (ESM) has been able historically to achieve comparatively good levels of socially inclusive economic growth. A pillar of that success has been a high level of associational membership and wage coordination, with practices that gained the label of ‘social dialogue’. In recent years several factors have been putting under this model and social dialogue under pressure.

Industrial relations, already under pressure for ten years as a result of the economic crisis and work restructuring, have met an unprecedented emergency with the Covid-19 pandemic. If on the one hand they responded quickly, with for example the signing of important protocols on the health and safety of workers, thereby showing their enduring relevance, on the other hand the overlap between emergency and long-term socio-economic crisis exacerbates some underlying problems and raises new ones.

The session proposes to think about the role of industrial relations and their developments in phases of crisis and emergency, not only pandemic, in Italy and abroad. Possible topics of interest to the session include, but are not limited to:

- the transformations of collective actors in phases of crisis and emergency, with reference to the processes of collective action of workers and companies and their preferences, also with regard to welfare issues. How much do companies and workers support the need for collective action? In what do phases of crisis and emergency distinguish from other times? What is the balance between individual and collective action on the employers’ side?
- the role of collective actors and negotiation in the transformations of work organization and enterprise restructuring, in the development of new work models (such as smart-working) and in the definition of working conditions, also with regard to safety;
- the role of the social partners, their pressure and lobbying activities, and forms of political exchange, in defining the responses to emergencies and crises, also with regard to the pandemic, as for example, the health policies adopted in various countries, income support schemes, new proposals on bargaining and minimum wages, the transformation of welfare systems. How much have tripartite negotiations informed policy making, at national and EU level? What is the role of trade unions and employers (individually or collectively) in policy-making? How much are companies willing to support the “socialisation of risks” and for what reasons?
- the influence of industrial relations institutions on the consequences of crises and the pandemic, in particular with regard to the transformations of public policies and welfare systems, and their implications in terms of inequalities between different groups of workers, with particular attention to the gender dimension.