

Special Issue: Pathways of Socio-Ecological Transformation for European Employment Relations

The German Journal of Industrial Relations (“Industrielle Beziehungen. Zeitschrift für Arbeit, Organisation und Management”) invites submissions for a special issue on the topic of socio-ecological transformation and its implications for European employment relations. The special issue aims to explore how the challenges and opportunities of the transition to a low-carbon and circular economy affect the institutions, actors, processes and practices of industrial relations in Europe and beyond. It also aims to explore in what ways the two aspects of the “twin challenge” of achieving a climate neutral, digitalised economy can be advanced in parallel, possibly reinforcing (or counteracting) one another.

The special issue is motivated by the observation that the European Union’s “Green Deal” initiative, which aims to make Europe the first climate-neutral continent by 2050, requires a robust socio-political foundation and the enhancement or promotion of labour standards (social criteria). Moreover, the Green Deal encounters collaboration from other global actors, such as China and the US, which have recently launched ambitious plans to reduce their carbon emissions and foster innovation in both green and digital sectors of the economy. For example, China’s 14th “Five-Year Plan” (2021-2025) sets a target of reaching carbon emissions by 2030 and achieving carbon neutrality by 2060, alongside targets for digital leadership in areas such as AI, quantum computing and semiconductors. The US Inflation Reduction Act (2022) and “Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act” of 2023 aim to create millions of green jobs and invest in clean energy infrastructure.

These developments raise important questions for the future of European employment relations, such as:

- What strategies do social partners and other stakeholders already employ or are developing, in order to shape the socio-ecological transformation in a way that supports a just transition for workers and communities affected by the shift to a green and digitalised economy?
- What are the potential complementarities and trade-offs between environmental, social sustainability and sovereignty in different sectors, regions and countries?
- How can the different social models of European countries, based on various versions of social dialogue, collective bargaining and workers’ participation, respond to the achievement of the Green Deal objectives and advance a more inclusive model of capitalism, even in a highly competitive international environment?
- What are the examples and insights from other countries and regions that have engaged in similar or alternative pathways of socio-ecological and digital transformation, such as China, India or the US? In what way could or might the more state-oriented form of capitalism, which is taking shape in other countries, be adjusted to match European goals and strategies?
- How can the German model of “organized capitalism” or “coordinated market economy”, which exhibits many of the necessary preconditions to advance an inclusive, socio-ecological transformation of the working society on the European level, be adapted and transferred to other contexts?

- How can digitalisation and the use of artificial intelligence assist to advance European goals of sustainable economies, inclusive societies and effective governance? How can an actively managed development and deployment of digital technologies aid achieve societal goals on organizational, corporatist or state levels?
- How are the broader issues of inclusiveness and equality, such as gender equality, care work as well as anti-discrimination and equal participation of migrant workers affected by the twin transition to a digitalised, sustainable economy? How can these issues and goals be addressed and advanced by the European employment relations system?
- What are examples concerning education, training and innovation in order to support the development of new skills, competencies and attitudes for workers and employers in the green economy and foster social inclusion, cohesion and resilience?
- How does the application of new European legislation, such as the “Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive”, influence the process of socio-ecological transformation?

We welcome theoretical, empirical and comparative papers from scholars of all social science disciplines that address these or related questions. We are especially interested in papers that adopt a cross-national or multi-level perspective and that engage with the latest developments and debates in the field of industrial relations. We also encourage submissions from practitioners who can offer reflective insights on their experiences and challenges in promoting or implementing socio-ecological transformation in their respective domains.

The deadline for submissions is **31 March 2024**. Papers in English language should be submitted online via the journal’s website: <https://www.nomos.de/zeitschriften/indbez/>. Please indicate in your cover letter that your paper is intended for the special issue on “Pathways of Socio-Ecological Transformation for European Employment Relations”. Papers should follow the journal’s guidelines for authors: <https://www.nomos.de/zeitschriften/indbez/#autorenhinweise>.

For any queries regarding the special issue, please contact the guest editors:

Jude Kirton-Darling (IndustriAll European Trade Union, Brussels);

Christian Kellermann (HTW Berlin);

Heiko Hossfeld (University of Labour, Frankfurt);

Simon Weingärtner (Leibniz University Hannover).