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Forschungsprojekt zu Sozialdumping in Europa

04.04.2013 - The term 'social dumping' is well entrenched in the European public discourse, both at the political and societal level. It is therefore all the more surprising that, despite its widespread use, it lacks a precise definition: it is unclear both which actors are involved in this form of dumping, and which practices share social dumping characteristics.

In autumn 2011, the European Trade Union Institute (ETUI) launched a research project 'Social Dumping in the Enlarged EU: Concepts, Challenges and Policy Options'. The project seeks to improve our understanding of the causes, mechanisms and effects of social dumping by reviewing its existing definitions and analysing specific dumping practices in the sphere of labour and capital mobility. At the end of the day, we would like to come up with a new, more informed conceptualisation of the notion, and provide well-grounded arguments and quality empirical evidence for future academic and policy debates.

Vera Trappmann's contribution will look at social dumping comparing MNCs in two sectors - steel and IT industry -, based on case studies in West and Eastern Europe, looking at locations in West Germany, East Germany, Poland, Hungary, Romania, and Bulgaria with several sites per country. It shows that social dumping occurs within one company, the global management putting pressure on all sites to lower labour standards. Each site acts in competition to each other, even within one country where the same regulatory framework and the same labour relations occur. Even within one site there might exist different labour standards due to mergers of companies with management trying to make employees accept the lowest standard. In a second step it evaluates and classifies the room for manoeuvre for labour to counteract social dumping. Comparing reactions in one country but across sectors we see differences due to the strength of labour representation but also across countries within one sector due to industrial relations, strength of labour representation, co-determination rights, experience with management's exigencies. Differences found within countries within one sector are due to strategic position of sites and individual commitment of local actors (both works councils and local management) and the local labour market.

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