



Research Unit “Labour and Personnel Economics”

Our topics

This research unit examines how employment is affected by technical progress, globalisation, digital and structural change and how the institutional framework determines the capacity of companies and employees to absorb external shocks. This includes research on:

- **Employment and unemployment**
Our studies show how labour market regulations and external shocks may affect the level of both employment and unemployment. The researcher identifies the key drivers that can contribute to increasing labour demand, boosting labour force participation, raising labour mobility and supporting the unemployed to return into employment. In addition, they regularly comment on the current state of employment and its forecast.
- **Working conditions**
Research in this area reveals how work organisations, skill requirements and the quality of jobs have been changing. In this respect the development of job satisfaction and its determinants is of particular interest to learn how employees evaluate working conditions in a changing environment.
- **Human resource management**
Our research and consulting activities show how companies both have shaped and should adapt work to cope with an increasing need for flexibility while improving employer branding. In addition, establishments are advised and supported in designing and implementing HR concepts, policies and programmes.

In all areas, research deals with both issues at the macroeconomic level and those linked to the attitudes and the behaviour of the individual company or employee. Our analyses combine state-of-the-art theoretical knowledge with a deep understanding of institutional frameworks.

Our studies provide sound empirical evidence based on large sample employer and employee dataset as well as official statistics. Our research covers issues that are significant and debated at the national as well as at the European level.

All team members have got a long standing track record in performing research or consulting. They are acknowledged members of the research community and are members of various advisory committees of employers’ and business associations, bipartite and tripartite initiatives as well as of ministries.

Selected recently released studies

Quality of Work in Europe

Employee satisfaction signals whether employees consider the quality of their own job to be good. The share of workers in a country that are satisfied with their job is thus a measure of the quality of the jobs in an economy as a whole. According to analyses with the EWCS 2015, the quality of work in the European Union and in the individual Member States can, thus, be deemed high.

The empirical findings also suggest that, in many places, workplace characteristics which are perceived to be generally detrimental and which in themselves are associated with a lower degree of job satisfaction are compensated by working conditions that are perceived as being supportive.

Is Digitalisation Placing New Demands on Leadership and Performance Management?

Empirical findings based on the IW Human Resources Panel 2017 and the EWCS 2015 suggest that digitalisation may promote changes in the HR policy areas of leadership and performance management.

Four out of ten companies in Germany are convinced that the ability of supervisors to identify solutions to unforeseen problems is set to become increasingly vital. Furthermore, mobile computer-workers benefit significantly more frequently both from individual bonus systems and agreed targets and from company-wide profit-sharing models.

The unintended impact of wage transparency

Econometric evidence based on data from the Socio-economic Panel (SOEP) reveals that wage comparisons worry those who earn less than their benchmark and don't bother those who earn more. In this respect, the impact of wage transparency on job or wage satisfaction appears to be asymmetrical. Thus, policies and initiatives that aim at fostering wage transparency by statutory regulations, e.g. due to gender equality considerations, not only increase red-tape, but may also have detrimental effects on job satisfaction or workplace atmosphere.

Once Down – Always Down? Empirical Findings on Wage and Income Mobility in Germany

Empirical results based on the Socio-Economic Panel (SOEP) show that over a quarter of low wage earners manage to rise above the low wage threshold. While the proportion of those upwardly mobile was in decline until approximately 2008, it has since then been gradually rising. There is only a limited connection between mobility out of the low-wage sector and the risk of poverty.

Selected ongoing projects



The project "ZEITREICH" supports the management and employee representatives of small and medium-sized establishments in the metalworking and chemical industry, in retail and public administration in implementing effective and efficient working time arrangements that improve the competitiveness of the company while increasing working time autonomy of the employees.

The project is conducted by a consortium of three research institutes within the framework of the Initiative New Quality of Work. Founded and is co-funded by the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (BMAS).



The capability to adapt to a changing environment and to recover from critical situations is deemed a significant determinant of well-being in the long run. This holds for both organisations and individuals. The project STÄRKE is to develop a holistic concept of the individual and organisation resilience and to test corresponding practices in cooperating SMEs.

The project is conducted by a consortium of four research institutions and is co-funded by the German Federal Ministry for Education and Research.

Contact

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