‘Implementation of International Framework Agreements: host-country evidence and policy implications’

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Context & Focus

Why International Framework Agreements (IFAs)?
• IFAs: integral part of an evolving labor governance regime
• Short supply of in-depth IFA case studies

The paper aims to:
• Assess the IFA impact at the level of MNC subsidiary drawing from case-study research
• Outline implications for practitioners and policy-makers
Design & methods

3 case-studies: Telefonica, Endesa, Inditex
- Telefonica: average case
- Endesa: low-end of IFA spectrum
- Inditex: high-end of IFA spectrum

Different methods:
- interviews
- internal document analysis
- case-law
- a small-scale survey
IFA implementation: evidence

Telefonica:
• Weak coverage
• Integration with existing tentative CSR policies
• Enforcement of compliance: IFA cures the symptom, not the disease

Inditex:
• Extended coverage
• Successful use of IFA as a CSR tool
• Rather positive outcomes on the ground (i.e. resolution of local disputes) albeit not always sustained

Endesa:
• Termination of the IFA one year after it was signed
IFA implementation: accounting for the evidence

- Institutional:
  • Local trade union presence & affiliation
  • Trade union legacies
  • International regulation (i.e. ILO Conventions)
  • CSR traditions

- Structural:
  • Sector & business activity
  • Differences among industries regarding MNC exposure to market & reputational accountability

- Nature of violation (i.e. collective bargaining vs child labour)
- Importance of regional dynamics (i.e. Europe vs LatAm)
Policy implications

For ILO (and other international jurisdictions)
• ‘complementarities’ between ILO and the IFAs

For local unions:
• Use of the IFA in conjunction with national judicial means

For global unions:
• Issues of representativeness & local involvement
• Use of the IFAs in conjunction with regional trade union networks

For both global unions & MNCs:
• Linkages between IFAs and MNC information and consultation structures
• Misconceptions regarding the nature of IFAs: the latter are bilateral CSR instruments with a dominant labour dimension