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Stream 17

Creating Sustainable Work Environments for Female Migrants

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While decreased social sustainability and increasingly precarious work conditions have been identified as problem areas by policy makers and scholars alike, these developments have so far not been viewed in context with one of the other big societal changes of our time, namely increased diversity through migration. Social sustainability encompasses well-being, health and access to health care, participation, as well as social, legal and political rights – in short, all prerequisites for what is commonly referred to as a “good life”. Since the 1990s, a shift in political discourse towards a deregulation of work has led to a more neoliberal view on work environments, leading to further precarization and less security (e.g. through cuts in welfare state provisions). For female migrant workers, achieving sustainability and security is particularly difficult, as they are impacted by both gender- and ethnicity-based discrimination, and often tend to work in professions that are highly susceptible to precarization and irregular types of work (e.g. in-house care-givers, cleaners, professionals in care institutions). Furthermore, according to a study conducted by the German ministry for Family, Senior Citizens, Family and Youth (BMFSFJ) female migrants are more frequently the primary or even only caretaker for their own families than German women. This leads to an added pressure, namely ensuring that family members are provided for, while trying to access the labor market in a foreign country with all possible challenges that may arise from this situation (e.g. recognition of degrees, language barriers). Insecurity and decreased sustainability as well as precarious forms of work result in a further de-stabilizing of female migrants’ position in society, instead of allowing for empowerment processes. Promoting equality, respecting diversity and ultimately reaching inclusion can therefore only be successful if sustainable work environments for female migrants are created. This requires not only their inclusion into the host society, but also a long-term approach to their role as both workers and primary caretakers of a future generation of persons with migratory background; reaching female migrants and offering sustainable solutions to job integration is therefore an important issue with long-term impact on all European societies.

Despite the increased scholarly attention that migratory movements are receiving, establishing social sustainability and the specific situation of female migrants at the intersection of two diversity dimensions (gender, migration) have so far rarely been analyzed in connection to each other. We therefore invite papers that look at sustainable work environments for female migrants, through theoretical contributions, as well as through empirical studies or examples of best practices. Possible topics may include different types of female migrant work environments (care settings, but also highly skilled professionals working in technology or education), different types of social sustainability issues (e.g. career possibilities, child care facilities), the impact of countries of origin and migration conditions, and the difficulties that women face when arriving from different cultural contexts to Germany or Austria, where care-work is still most of the time traditionally assigned to female workers as an additional job to tackle on top of their remunerated occupation.

Submissions to this stream can be in the form of long abstracts (up to 1500 words), developmental papers (3000-5000 words, including references) or full papers (no length restrictions) by the deadline of 1 March 2021. Please process your registration and paper submission online via www.edi-conference.org.