

18<sup>th</sup> IMISCOE annual conference in Luxembourg, July 7-9, 2021 – IILME call for papers on

## **State policies, migrant workers and COVID-19**

In the classic contribution by Castles and Miller (1993), our times were named 'The age of Migration'. We have seen for some years the tensions between state policies to stop refugees from reaching the shores of Europe and policies to enhance labour mobility and migration. And in this context, the COVID-19 pandemic breaks out...

The COVID-19 pandemic plainly reveals that mobility and migration form a vital source of labour within our societies today. Where borders close and new borders are set up in attempts to prevent the virus from spreading, mobility and migration of labour within and across state lines is both restricted and enhanced. When air traffic came to an almost complete stop over the world, the Austrian government arranged to fly in migrant care workers nonetheless. Despite lockdowns, the German agricultural lobby convinced German and Romanian governments to create an air bridge between Germany and Romania, so that Romanian workers could be flown in for the German asparagus harvest. Where in the Netherlands, the government did not accommodate parliamentary requests to lift the employment restrictions for asylum seekers (with high chances to receive refugee status), in Belgium, asylum seekers were allowed to help out with the spring harvest. These are some of many examples where policies accommodate the persistent market demand for migrants as an essential source of labour.

Migrants occupy vital positions in our labour markets, in the care sector, as agricultural workers, or delivering packages or groceries, and the continued demand for their vital labour makes state policies fluid. **This calls for critical reflection on the role of state policies with regards to migrant labour in times of, and beyond, COVID-19.**

The aim of this special session within the IMISCOE 2021 Standing Committee on Immigration, Immigrants and the Labour Markets in Europe (IILME) is to explore the role of state policies in response to the COVID-19 pandemic in shaping labour market opportunities and conditions for migrant workers in European labour markets. We **welcome contributions** that explore this both from theoretical and empirical angles, in the form of single or comparative case studies, taking or combining perspectives from various disciplines. The call for papers is thus broad, and invites multiple perspectives on the intertwined role of state policies and migrant labour in and beyond COVID-19 times.

**Please submit paper proposals of ca. 500 words, plus a short bio, before November 15 to [iilme@remeso.org](mailto:iilme@remeso.org).** Based on the submissions we will draft a panel proposal to submit to the IMISCOE annual conference in Luxembourg 2021. We aim to create a special issue for the journal of *Comparative Migration Studies* based on the papers presented. Please do contact us at [iilme@remeso.org](mailto:iilme@remeso.org) in case of any questions regarding this call.

### **IILME, who are we?**

We are the Standing Committee on Immigration, Immigrants and Labour Markets in Europe (IILME) within the IMISCOE network. Our research focuses on the links between increasing migration, labour market dynamics and access to welfare resources. These are central to the discourse on both immigration and integration policies of newly arrived migrants and their children. Negative views on the socio-economic effects of migration, often based on scarce scientific or empirical evidence, influence the political debate around these themes. However, little knowledge exists on the role of

labour market actors in influencing immigration and integration policies and practices, as well as the migrants' labour market positions and experiences.

We explore the complexities and contradictions of the interaction between migration phenomena and the labour market in a time of rapidly changing migration, integration and labour market policies. The originality of the program lies in its theoretical framework. We seek to combine the tradition of industrial relations, political economy — especially research on segmented labour market(s) — and gender studies to explore multiple intersectional inequalities as well as the precarization of migrant and ethnic workers within labour markets.

Find out more about us at: [iilme-research.org](http://iilme-research.org)