Trade-Migration Nexus
How do trade agreements affect migration governance?

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International trade and migration are two important facets of an increasingly interconnected world. So far research has addressed the interplay of trade and migration flows – our focus are the links between trade and migration policies.

Rather unnoticed from heated migration debates, states have progressively used trade agreements to govern different aspects of international migration such as:

− Facilitating international mobility
− Strengthening migration control
− Protecting migrant rights

We show how international governance shapes the classification of people’s movement as either mobility or migration, and how this feeds back differently in national migration systems.

Main research aims

− Conceptualize and measure the nature and scope of migration provisions in trade agreements
− Explore the drivers of these provisions and their effects on regional and national migration systems
− Examine the implications of migration governance through trade policy instruments for migrants’ rights
− Contribute to the interdisciplinary literature on regime complexity, issue-linkage and venue-shopping in International Relations using a multi-level and cross-regional comparative perspective.

Main deliverables in 2020


National implementation – Case Studies

Four in-depth case studies assessing how migration provisions in trade agreements are implemented in national immigration regimes. For that purpose, we look at four developed economies in Europe and Asia, two of which belong to a regional economic community and two in the same region which do not.

Database on migration rules in trade agreements

We compile the most comprehensive database of migration-related content in international trade agreements:

− more than 600 trade agreements
− Starting in the 1960s up to the latest agreement in 2019
− Including countries on all five continents
− XY variables related to migration provisions

Our MITA database is based on an innovative conceptualization of migration provisions according to their regulatory purpose. The detailed and comprehensive dataset of all migration-related content in trade agreements is a highly valuable resource for researchers and policymakers alike.

Module I studies social inequalities. We contribute to this aim by studying how international governance fosters privileges and inequalities among different people on the move.

Descriptive overview on the frequency of migration provisions (38 PTAs between 2011 and 2019)

- Mobility provisions are the most common

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