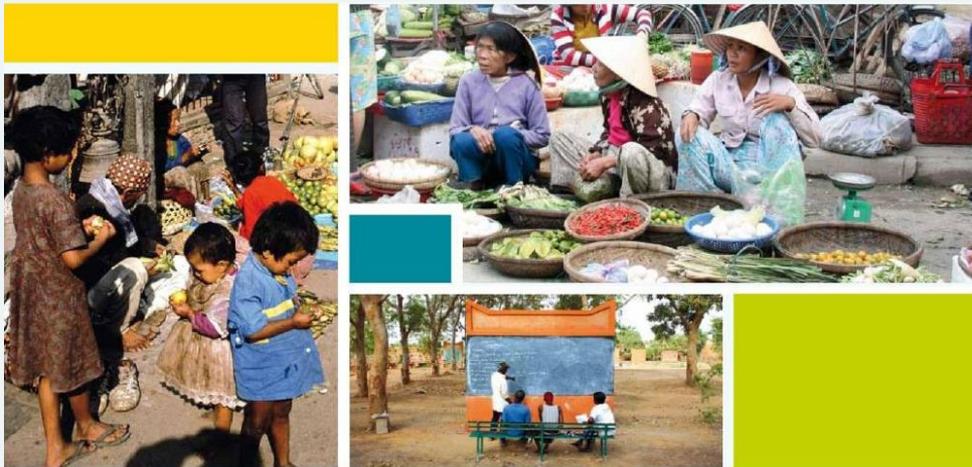


# nopoor final conference

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## TRADE AGREEMENTS AND CORE LABOUR STANDARDS



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**nopoor**  
Enhancing Knowledge for  
Renewed Policies against Poverty



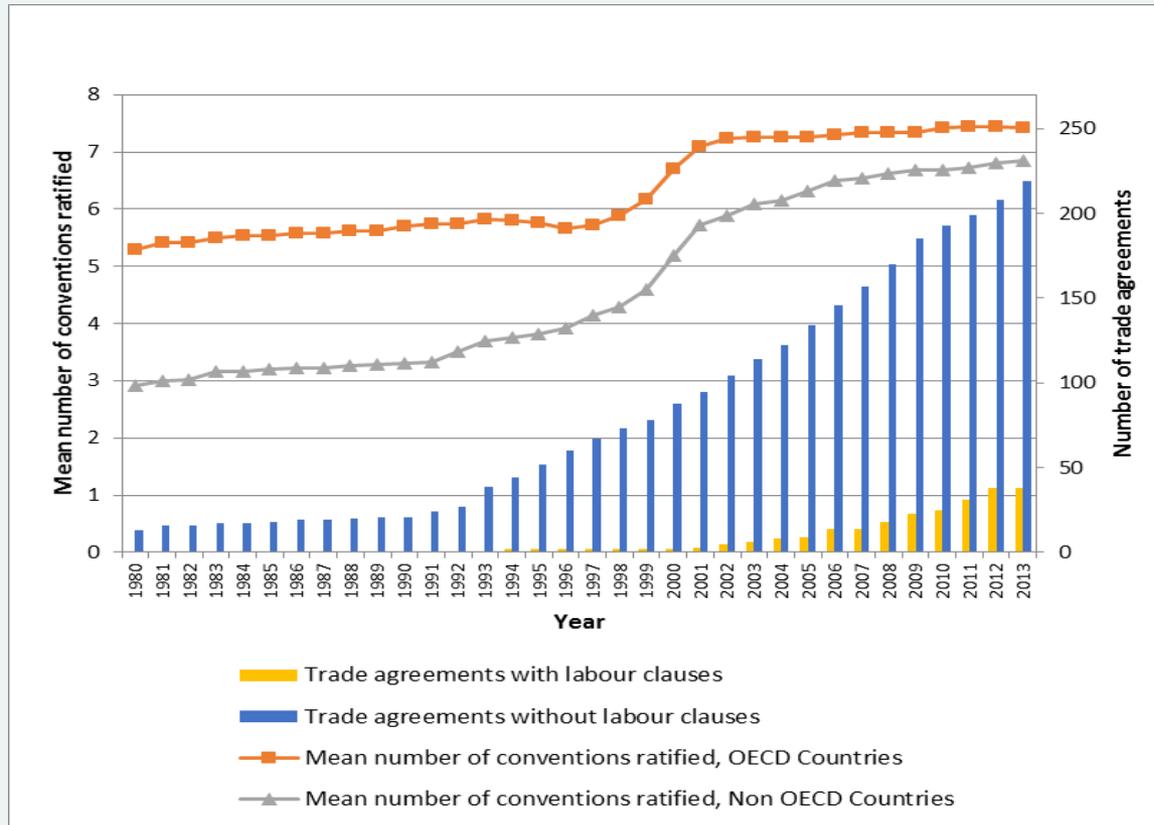
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# Main topic and context

- No-decent work maintains a poverty trap.
- SDG 8 : “Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all”.
- Other SDG goals are also concerned “no poverty”, “gender equality”, “reduced inequality” and “partnership for the goals”.
- Growing number of free trade agreements including social and labour provisions in response to a growing mistrust of globalization and free trade and nervousness with a social “race to the bottom” due to increasing international competition.
- Frequent reference to “decent work” and to the eight “fundamental” ILO conventions concerning 4 issues : child labour, discrimination, forced labour, collective actions
- Influence of these provisions on ratification of conventions and on practice ?



# Main topic and context



# Method

- Econometric model for testing the influence of RTAs (200+), with or without labour provisions on the number of ratified fundamental ILO conventions and on labour practice (CIRI index)...
- Distinction between Trade agreements with labour provisions and trade agreements without labour provisions (weighted by the value of exports)
- Considering control variables as, GDP, GDP per capita, population, FDI, political rights and civil liberties, federalism, etc.



# Key findings

- Trade agreements raise the number of fundamental ILO conventions after their entry in force only when they include labour provisions.
- Paradoxically trade agreements have significant effects on workers' rights only when they do not include labour provisions.
- For developing countries, the effect on the number of ILO conventions is almost three times greater than for developed countries when labour provisions are included.
- For developing as well as developed countries, trade agreements have no effects on workers' rights, with or without provisions.
- Trade agreements always increase the probability of ratification for conventions concerning the freedom of association, discrimination and child labour.



# Challenges

- The increasing tendency to include labour provisions in trade agreements seems to reflect a certain consensus that labour issues can be addressed at a bilateral level.
- Trade agreements with labour provisions do increase the expected number of conventions ratified.
- However, the evidences suggest that the inclusion of labour provisions in trade agreements does not directly or automatically translate into improvements to workers 'rights.



# Policy implications

- The EU, should continue to consider social and labour provisions in trade agreements as a potentially useful mechanism to improve labour conditions and reduce poverty.
- Ratifications are a first step : they allow for inspection and surveillance by the ILO and give the legitimacy of international law.
- Trade agreements could be made conditional on prior ratification of ILO Conventions.
- Monitoring of the implementation of labour provisions and follow-up procedures should be strengthened and more systematically applied.

text



# Policy implications

- Trade agreements should avoid provisions that may give grounds for the charge of disguised protectionism. "Positive" sanctions, such as conditional aid and supplementary trade openness (GSP+), should provide more incentives than "negative" sanctions.
- The inclusion of labour standards in trade agreements is under pressure from civil society, including trade unions and NGOs. The close involvement of civil society should continue to be considered as fundamental for the successful implementation of the provisions.
- Siroën, J-M. & Andrade, D., 2016, Trade Agreements and Core Labour Standards, NOPOOR Policy Brief No. 5
- Siroën, J-M. & Andrade, D., 2016, Regional Trade Agreements and the Spread of International Labour Standards. NOPOOR Working Paper n°16.

