

Call for Abstracts

The 8th Conference of the *Regulating for Decent Work* Network

Organized by the *International Labour Office* (ILO)

In collaboration with:

Amsterdam Institute for Labour Studies / Hugo Sinzheimer Institut für Arbeits- und Sozialrecht (AIAS-HSI) – University of Amsterdam, Netherlands

Centre for Employment and Labour Relations Law (CELRL) – University of Melbourne, Australia

Centre for Industrial Relations and Human Resources (CIRHR) – University of Toronto, Canada

Centre for Informal Sector and Labour Studies (CISLS) – Jawaharlal Nehru University, India

Decent Work Regulation Project – University of Durham, UK

Industrial and Labor Relations (ILR) School – Cornell University, USA

Institut Arbeit und Qualifikation (IAQ) – University of Duisburg-Essen, Germany

Institute for Applied Economic Research (IPEA), Brasilia, Brazil

Korea Labor Institute (KLI) – Seoul, Republic of Korea

Southern Centre for Inequality Studies (SCIS) – University of Witwatersrand, South Africa

Work and Equalities Institute (WEI) – University of Manchester, UK

Ensuring decent work in times of uncertainty

International Labour Office

Geneva, Switzerland

10–12 July 2023

www.ilo.org/rdw2023

The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 unleashed a crisis of great magnitude, exposing the fragility of socio-economic systems globally and underlining the vulnerabilities faced by people, especially in the world of work. Inequalities between and within countries became starker. In developing countries in particular, the pandemic revealed the extreme economic insecurity and vulnerability of workers in the informal economy. As the pandemic subsided, and while the labour market impacts – ranging from lost labour incomes to persistent gender gaps and limited access to social protection – were still being felt by many, the global economy and people's lives were hit further by cascading crises. The climate crisis, conflicts, disruptions to global supply chains, among others, have led to rising inflationary pressures, further heightening the uncertainty in the labour markets.

The interlinked crises can threaten the development of the world's most vulnerable and marginalized populations, including the well-being of those in high-income countries, where the cost-of-living crisis has been unfolding with ever greater ferocity. Not only do these crises undermine efforts to ensure decent work

for all but could also hamper efforts to make labour markets more inclusive and resilient and risk further increasing inequalities between and within countries. In developing countries in particular, with large social protection deficits, overcoming these crises has been quite challenging as macroeconomic policies are severely restrained owing to lack of fiscal space and financial constraint. Challenges in global value chains have further heightened uncertainty with many small firms in both advanced and developing countries facing issues ranging from the cancellation of contracts to changes in payment terms, which have had major implications on workers as well as significant knock-on effects on prices. The multitude of these challenges has led many policymakers and researchers to explore the development of alternative policies and approaches to address the crises in advanced and developing countries alike. The crises are impacting workers' well-being in a complex manner. The climate crisis – heat waves and floods – is already having profound impacts on the lives and livelihoods of people, and these impacts are being felt even more acutely in developing countries.

The RDW conference in 2023 will explore the implications of today's multiple and interlinked crises on the world of work. There have been growing calls for a just transition towards environmentally sustainable economies and societies for all, which provides an opportunity to create decent jobs, address prevailing inequalities, strengthen social protection systems, enhance inclusion, and promote transition from a high-carbon economy. The conference will focus on what transformative policies and innovative institutions are required to tackle the labour and social consequences of the multiple crises in the world, and to ensure a more equitable and just society. Papers are invited to present research results and to propose new ideas and policies with a focus on: (i) pro-employment macroeconomic policies in times of crisis and transition; (ii) trade and global value chains in times of crisis: implications for decent work; (iii) the role of institutions in ensuring decent work and universal social protection; and (iv) regulatory innovation in an era of crises.

The 8th RDW Conference will be held in the International Labour Office, Geneva, from 10–12 July 2023. The Conference will be co-hosted by the University of Amsterdam's Institute for Labour Studies / Hugo Sinzheimer Institut für Arbeits- und Sozialrecht (AIAS-HSI), the University of Melbourne's Centre for Employment and Labour Relations Law (CELRL), the University of Toronto's Centre for Industrial Relations and Human Resources (CIRHR), Jawaharlal Nehru University's Centre for Informal Sector and Labour Studies (CISLS), the University of Durham's Decent Work Regulation Project, the Cornell University's ILR School, the University of Duisburg-Essen's Institut Arbeit und Qualifikation (IAQ), the Institute for Applied Economic Research (IPEA), the Korea Labor Institute (KLI), the University of Witwatersrand's Southern Centre for Inequality Studies (SCIS) and the University of Manchester's Work and Equalities Institute (WEI). Researchers from all regions are welcome. In past years, the Conference has attracted researchers from a range of fields that include law, economics, industrial relations, labour and development studies and geography.

CONFERENCE TRACKS

Track I. Pro-employment macroeconomic policies in times of crisis and transition

The COVID-19 crisis has once again highlighted the important role of pro-employment macroeconomic policies, especially fiscal measures, in protecting businesses and jobs from complex shocks. This experience has added to the significant lessons learned from the global financial crisis (GFC) and the mistakes made during the interim years, most notably premature austerity delayed recovery from the GFC in several advanced economies. Developing countries face a range of constraints to maximizing the impact of pro-employment macroeconomic policies, including limited domestic productive capacity, large informal sector and restricted fiscal space. In these economies, policies that support structural transformation need to go

hand in hand with macroeconomic policies, but the shocks felt over 2022 have made this task even more challenging. Adopting such an approach is not only important to tackle future shocks and crises, but also to facilitate transformation and shifts to more inclusive and sustainable economies.

In this uncertain environment, Track I will seek to address the following questions:

- What have been the impacts of macroeconomic policies on labour markets during and after the COVID-19 crisis?
- How should fiscal and monetary policies be adjusted to support a human-centred recovery, while addressing the inequalities and deficits left over from the COVID-19 crisis, along with the cost-of-living crisis? What lessons from income policies in previous decades can be applied to address today's crises?
- How can countries manage public debt while financing the recovery and necessary just transitions, including tackling climate change?
- How can developing countries implement a coherent framework covering both macroeconomic and sectoral policies that support structural transformation, job creation and improved quality of employment, including universal access to social protection?
- What are the successful approaches to achieving coherent macroeconomic and sectoral policies in developing countries? How can mission-oriented macro and sectoral policies be implemented successfully?
- How to manage post-COVID-19 public debt and financing challenges in developing countries to support a job-rich recovery and just transitions?
- What are the different mechanisms for financing social protection and job creation for just transitions, including transitions towards the formalization of the economy? What innovative financing mechanisms can be implemented to increase the fiscal space in developing countries (e.g., sovereign wealth funds, payment for eco-system services)?
- What are the different approaches for gender-responsive macroeconomic policies? What employment policies are needed for a gender-responsive recovery?
- What is the impact of crises on inequality? What is the role of macroeconomic policies in promoting more inclusive labour market outcomes?

Track coordinators: Sangheon Lee, Sukti Dasgupta, Ekkehard Ernst, Christina Behrendt, Sher Verick, Dorothea Schmidt-Klau, Roxana Maurizio, Imraan Valodia

Track II. Trade and global value chains in times of crisis: Implications for decent work

Global value chains (GVCs), which have become highly efficient, specialized and interconnected, have in the past few years seen disruptions and become extremely fragile to global risks. The COVID-19 pandemic exposed vulnerabilities of trade and GVCs that have continued to emerge in the context of conflict, climate crisis and the current cost-of-living crisis. This has resulted in both demand and supply shocks that portend an extended period of 'de-globalization' and brings into question the basic business model premise of GVCs. The unravelling of GVCs had started even prior to the current crises in response to political, technological (including automation, robotization, and digitalization of the production of goods and services) and structural changes (such as, the shifting geography of global sourcing, and increasing market concentration and supply base consolidation). The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the impact of these changes owing to the supply side disruptions and changed consumer preferences, evidenced through the surge in demand for goods through e-commerce marketplace platforms, which is impacting the GVC model. To adapt to these changes, companies are reassessing their sourcing strategies, including multi-sourcing, expanding inventories, nearshoring or proximity sourcing and regionalization, among others.

Such transformations and shocks not only affect trade and investment decisions but also have important implications for the world of work, and particularly for small firms and for workers in developing and emerging countries.

Track II invites papers that bring in new perspectives and strategies at the international, national and local levels to ensure decent work for all in global value chains. The track will address the following questions:

- What are the implications of ‘de-globalisation’ and GVC restructuring on the geographies of production, industrial development and employment strategies, especially in the developing countries?
- What are the distributional impacts on workers, and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) specifically with respect to employment and work quality?
- How do technological upgrading and changes related to Industry 4.0 impact employment and work quality in GVCs, including as a result of the rise of e-commerce platforms and reshoring in the developing countries? Will these changes lead to a long-term structural transformation? What are the skills and related policies needed to ensure an inclusive, equitable GVC upgrading?
- How do the current crises impact jobs in different tiers of value chains? How are SMEs and different categories of workers, especially those with higher vulnerabilities, affected by the current crises?
- Is there a restructuring and rethinking of the GVC model? What shape could it take? Will it lead to a reconfiguration of production processes? What could a potential restructuring of the GVC model mean for its potential to drive inclusive growth and development?
- How do current crises impact regulatory and governance frameworks in trade and GVCs, including access to remedy and grievance mechanisms?

Track coordinators: Anne Posthuma, Arianna Rossi, Uma Rani, Praveen Jha, Marva Corley, Anil Verma

Track III. Role of institutions in ensuring decent work and universal social protection

This track addresses the problem of how to make progress towards the decent work for all objective in the context of the current energy, food and climate crises that have emerged or reached a more critical stage in the immediate wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. Turbulent times create both challenges and opportunities. The COVID-19 pandemic at one stage appeared to offer a real opportunity to bring about a change in the way we work, and how we value and protect those engaged in essential work. The pandemic also exposed significant gaps in social protection coverage, comprehensiveness and adequacy across all countries, and underlined the urgency of closing the gaps and to do so through integrated and mutually supportive public policy responses. The worldwide energy and food crises and looming economic recession have buried that dialogue as concerns now focus on the threats to living standards. The poorest countries have much lower resources on which to draw, but even in high-income countries the less well-off households often lack access to social protection, savings or other resources, such as family networks, to see them through the crisis. The growing diversity in work arrangements are providing new sources of economic insecurity.

These developments are putting new and extreme pressures on wage-setting and other aspects of labour protection and social security and support systems. The responses to these crises can vary: a cost-of-living crisis can induce new forms of protest and organization and solidarity-based responses to protect the vulnerable or it can lead to uneven and patchy responses that increase inequalities. These crises are occurring alongside the transitions to new forms of technology and to the new ways of producing, working and living required by the climate emergency. The prospects for decent work will also therefore depend on

the extent to which these successive crises are accelerating or stalling these transitions and affecting support for displaced workforces, including training, unemployment and other forms of social protection as well as job creation programmes, which also has an impact on their work-life balance.

Track III invites papers to stimulate dialogue between academics, policymakers and practitioners from the different disciplines and will address the following questions:

- How are wage-setting institutions (minimum wages, collective bargaining, public sector pay) and key social actors responding to the cost-of-living crisis?
- To what extent have the energy and food crises and the associated changes in market conditions led to solidarity-based responses with respect to wage protection?
- How have social protection systems responded to the unstable times and changing labour market systems to ensure adequate coverage and levels of benefits? How can social protection systems be used as one of the main tools aimed at contributing to formalizing labour markets?
- How can we ensure sustainable interface between ensuring income security and work-life balance?
- Are there new forms of protest and solidarity-based responses to protect the vulnerable workers, including platform workers? Can broader lessons be learned about organising platform workers from informal workers' strategies?
- What is the impact of the pandemic followed by the energy and food crises on employment and wages in countries around the world, and specifically on the most vulnerable groups including those in informal employment?
- What policies are required to ensure that the work of frontline workers is “valued” and protected?
- What is the extent of support for transitions to a greener and a digital world and has the support improved or deteriorated in the pandemic and following crises?
- How is collective bargaining addressing new challenges, related to just transitions, economic insecurity and technological transformations of work?

Track coordinators: Gerhard Bosch, Jill Rubery, Kea Tijdens, Virginia Doellgast, Susan Hayter, Janine Berg, Jeong-Hee Lee, Kroum Markov

Track IV. Regulatory innovation in an era of crises

As the global economy is shaken by sequential and interlinked crises, labour actors are adopting novel regulatory strategies to sustain decent work. One key phenomenon is a heightened attention to the effective implementation of labour rights and standards. Some States are increasingly devoting resources to the enforcement of labour and social protection laws: restructuring enforcement agencies; testing digitalized techniques for identifying and averting labour abuses; integrating trade unions into enforcement mechanisms; and mandating joint and several liability in supply chains, among other strategies.

Another important trend is the increasing recourse to legal fora by individuals, trade unions and civil society organizations. Campaigns by platform workers that engage with legislative processes and courts to assert labour and social security law coverage and basic rights (minimum wages, annual leave, bargaining rights, protection in case of sickness, maternity, unemployment, employment injury or for old age, etc.) have become emblematic. In other settings – often, although not exclusively, in the global South – informal workers are being highly inventive in their strategic engagement with law. Domestic workers, street vendors, homeworkers and waste pickers are targeting the array of interlinked legal regimes that shape their working lives – licensing laws, zoning ordinances, public order statutes, waste management frameworks, in addition to more conventional labour law and social protection regimes. These actors are also pursuing a range of

legal outcomes: to be formally recognized as “workers”, reconfigure private homes as workplaces, secure public space, escape police harassment, form trade unions or cooperatives, or be recognized for collective bargaining.

Furthermore, these diverse regulatory strategies are intersecting with, and are driven by, new fields of engagement, in particular the nexus of labour regulation and climate change, and new legislative strategies, including those – at the international level – to include safety and health among the fundamental principles and rights at work (2022) and to articulate a regulatory regime for decent work in apprenticeships (expected in 2023). Papers in this Track will address a broad range of questions on regulatory innovation in the uncertain landscape of contemporary working life. They will be drawn from a range of interdisciplinary perspectives and methodologies and investigate countries in all regions.

In particular, Track IV invites papers that address the following questions:

- How are labour and social protection regulatory regimes responding to the transition from the COVID-19 pandemic to a global cost-of-living crisis? Are new strategies emerging that can sustain decent work in circumstances of spreading poverty, rising inflation, and the risk of a further wave of austerity policies?
- How effective are new strategies for labour law enforcement? Have effective new methods or techniques been discovered, or traditional enforcement mechanisms reinforced?
- Has the pandemic-era anxiety about unacceptable labour standards in global supply chains been translated into legal reform? How effective are “soft standards” for example, of the type associated with living wage campaigns?
- What regulatory strategies by workers and their collective organizations are most promising with a view to strengthening and extending labour and social security rights and standards? Are litigation strategies an effective weapon for workplace change? Which are the most successful? What is the intensified engagement of unions and other civil society organizations with the courts and tribunals revealing about the role of litigation in social change?
- Can broader lessons be learned from targeted legal reform based on judicial decisions? What can be learned from new laws/proposals on platform work, including at the EU-level? What are the impacts of new legislative and judicial interventions regarding platform work undertaken at the country level on job creation, working conditions and the sustainability of the business models?
- What will a new ILO apprenticeship standard add to ongoing efforts to support youth employment in particular?
- What lessons can be learned from the recent engagement with climate change in labour regulation scholarship and policy?
- What kind of global governance system can be envisaged that would reduce between-country inequalities and ensure fair working conditions for all workers across the globe?

Track coordinators: Deirdre McCann, Sean Cooney, Uma Rani, Valerie Van Goethem, Lisa Tortell

DAY 1: KEYNOTE ADDRESS

TBD

DAY 2: PLENARY ON

TBD

DAY 3: CLOSING PLENARY ON

TBD

DEADLINES

Abstract submission (RDW Fellowship applicants)	15 January 2023
Abstract submission (General and Special Session proposals)	31 January 2023
Communication of acceptance (RDW Fellowship applicants)	28 February 2023
Communication of acceptance (General and Special Session proposals)	3 April 2023
Full paper submission	31 May 2023

Registration for the Conference will open on Monday, 10 April 2023

SUBMISSION OF ABSTRACTS

The organizing committee invites you to submit abstracts for the 2023 RDW Conference:

- Abstracts should be in English.
- Abstracts should have a maximum of 400 words, containing the following elements: introduction, research question(s), methodology, contribution to literature and findings.
- Abstracts must be submitted on the conference website, via the link to submissions: www.conftool.org/rdw2023
- The author(s) must indicate their preferred conference track.
- **Deadline for abstract submission (General): 31 January 2023.**
- **Deadline for abstract submission (RDW Fellowship applicants): 15 January 2023.**

The abstracts will be selected on the basis of a double-blind peer-review process. The selection will be based on (i) thematic fit (15 per cent), (ii) innovative nature (25 per cent), (iii) policy relevance (10 per cent), (iv) contribution to the literature and body of knowledge in general (15 per cent); and (v) quality of methodology and analytical rigour (35 per cent).

Authors can submit more than one abstract but can present only one paper at the Conference.

Guidelines for final papers can be found on the conference website. It is expected that a Special issue for a Journal will be produced, drawing on selected conference papers.

PROPOSALS FOR SPECIAL SESSIONS

Special Sessions devoted to existing research projects or specific themes with an international content are encouraged. They will be 90 minutes in length and involve at least three presenters. The proposals:

- should be in English;
- should describe the session as a whole (maximum of 800 words), including the names and affiliations of the presenters, the chair and the discussant, if applicable;
- must also include brief descriptions of the individual papers (maximum 150 words each) proposed for the session; and
- must be submitted on the conference website via the link to submissions: www.conftool.org/rdw2023.

Deadline for submission of Special Session proposals: 31 January 2023.

The proposals will be selected on the basis of a double-blind peer-review process. The selection will be based on (i) thematic fit (15 per cent), (ii) innovative nature (25 per cent), (iii) policy relevance (10 per cent), (iv) contribution to the literature and body of knowledge in general (15 per cent); and (v) quality of methodology and analytical rigor (35 per cent).

Guidelines for final papers can be found on the conference website.

FEES AND EXPENSES

There will be no fee for conference participants. Travel costs must be met from participants' own resources, although limited funds will be available for authors of selected papers who are from and reside in developing or emerging countries (see "RDW Fellowships" below).

RDW FELLOWSHIPS

A unique aspect of the RDW Conference is the commitment to creating an environment for global research dialogue, especially between developed and developing countries. In this respect, a RDW Fellowship fund has been established to support **researchers from and residing in [developing or emerging countries](#) who may otherwise be prevented from attending**. Interested researchers **who have not been awarded a RDW Fellowship grant before** are strongly encouraged to submit their abstracts no later than 15 January 2023 (please note that this deadline for submission is two weeks earlier than the general deadline). Successful applicants will receive RDW Fellowship grants of an amount determined by the estimated cost of travel and other expenses. In the case of multiple authors, only one author will be granted the fellowship.

COMMITTEES, NETWORK AND SECRETARIAT

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Secretariat: Laura Finkelstein, ILO, Geneva, Switzerland

FURTHER INFORMATION

Further details are available at the RDW website: www.ilo.org/rdw2023

For any queries, please contact the Conference Organizing Committee at: rdw@ilo.org