



Call for Abstracts

The Second Conference of the *Regulating for Decent Work* network
Organized by the International Labour Office
In collaboration with the University of Manchester's Fairness at Work (FaW)
Research Group and the University of Melbourne's Centre for Employment and
Labour Relations Law (CELRL)

Regulating for a Fair Recovery

**International Labour Office
Geneva, Switzerland
6-8 July 2011**

In the most prominent global policy agendas, the economic crisis has relegated labour market regulation to a subordinate status. Yet at national-level there have been notable successes in sustaining regulatory institutions and adjusting them to recessionary conditions; and there are signs of ongoing innovation and evolution in regulatory strategies, design and techniques in all regions. The altered economic conditions have also prompted reconsideration of longstanding research and policy themes, lending some new resonance while others are refashioned or discarded. Among the most urgent tasks for researchers and policy-makers is to determine how labour market regulation can help to promote a fair recovery: one that generates and sustains decent jobs. This project entails a set of wide-ranging and complex challenges that include identifying the role of labour regulation in curbing spiralling unemployment and halting the decline in wage growth; gauging the effect of new regulatory agendas on issues such as fairness and job quality; and identifying the role of implementation and enforcement of labour laws in the altered economic context.

To advance these debates, the *Regulating for Decent Work* Network is pleased to announce the Second RDW Conference, to be held in the International Labour Office, Geneva from 6-8 July 2011. The RDW Conference will be co-hosted by the University of Manchester's Fairness at Work Research Group (FaW) and the University of Melbourne's Centre for Employment and Labour Relations Law (CELRL). Researchers from all regions and from a range of disciplines including law, economics, industrial relations, development studies, sociology, psychology and geography are encouraged to attend.

Submission of abstracts

Abstracts should be submitted to rdw@ilo.org. They will be subject to a competitive review process. It is expected that a number of edited volumes will be published drawn from selected conference papers.

Deadlines

Abstract submission (RDW Fellowship applicants)	31 December 2010
Abstract submission (general)	31 January 2011
Communicating acceptance (fellowship applicants)	28 February 2011
Communicating acceptance (general)	31 March 2011
Full paper submission	31 May 2011

Conference tracks

Track 1 **Fairness at the workplace after the crisis**

This track focuses on recent developments at the workplace level in regulations, processes and practices regarding fairness in the workplace. The recession experienced in developed and developing worlds since the global economic crisis has undoubtedly increased the power of management at the workplace as employees become more fearful of their economic future. A major concern is how the recession may be impacting upon the fairness of processes and on opportunities for employee voice within the workplace. Of particular importance are the methods used to select staff for redundancy and the impact of downsizing on those who remain in post but who may still live in fear of joining their ex colleagues in unemployment in the future. There is also considerable potential in this climate for a reversal of workplace policies and practices that promote dignity at work, diversity of employment and equal opportunities, fair pay and rewards, promotion and grievance procedures, work life balance and decent working time, employee health and wellbeing, and employee voice. These risks may grow alongside the spread and development of new policies and regulations that in principle should act to promote and regulate fairness at the workplace; for example, EU countries are still in the process of fully implementing new legislation on non discrimination across a wide range of categories, sexual harassment has fairly recently been recognised as a form of sex discrimination, working time regulations have become more inclusive, information and consultation systems are still being developed under the influence of EU directives. While much of this legislative advance applies to developed countries, there has also been increasing attention paid to issues of gender discrimination and excluded groups within developing economies. Furthermore, corporate codes of conduct are also being established with respect to fair labour conditions within global production chains.

Papers for this track are particularly welcome that address issues of fairness at the workplace under the impact of recessionary conditions and/or which consider whether regulation (legal or voluntary) and/or employee voice mechanisms are able to mitigate the impact of the recession on fairness at work.

Track 2 Decent working conditions: regulation's dispensable ideal?

The global economic crisis has disrupted existing narratives of the function and promise of labour market regulation. The crisis has ushered in a more prominent role for regulation, yet one that is centred on financial markets. In the policy debates on labour markets, calls for novel or revived regulatory strategies vie with the more influential assertion that regulation is irrelevant to, or will even impede, the global recovery. As a result, the traditional objectives of labour regulation – security, equality, worker wellbeing etc. - are deemed subordinate to, or a distraction from, more compelling economic objectives, and a number of governments have postponed planned extensions of worker entitlements, particularly those that relate to wages and work/family reconciliation. Yet evolution in the objectives and techniques of labour regulation can still be discerned. As reducing unemployment is elevated to an overriding objective, more frequent recourse has been made to policies that are recognised in recent literature as forms of regulation (job creation programmes, work-sharing initiatives, financial incentives etc.). In other contexts, the conventional technique of ascribing legal rights to individual workers endures, as is illustrated by the extension of the ILO's project of regulating 'non-standard' work-forms to domestic work.

In this upheaval, the role of regulation in improving the quality of working life is ripe for investigation, both to clarify the status of job quality as a policy objective and to develop theoretical and empirical models with which to assess regulatory trends. Track Two will pursue this goal by exploring the evolution of working conditions regulation in the recession. Among the questions that will be addressed are: Has improving the quality of working life been discredited as a regulatory objective? Are working conditions rights being curbed as part of austerity programmes? Is the commitment of policy-makers to job quality more tentative for certain categories of workers? Are regulatory strategies being adjusted? Or have employers had recourse to pre-existing regulatory measures to adjust labour processes and labour costs? What role should working conditions regulation play in recovery programmes?

Papers are particularly welcome that have a focus on the regulatory dimensions of wages, working hours, work-family/work-life and work organization. Multidisciplinary approaches and papers on low-income countries are also encouraged.

Track 3 Wages, inequality and economic growth

The two most notable consequences of the crisis for labour markets have been the increase in global unemployment rates (often combined with involuntary reductions in hours of work) and the decline in wage growth, sometimes even cuts in real wages. In many countries, and particularly in advanced economies, the crisis followed years of slow wage growth, increases in inequality and declines in the share of labour compensation in GDP (the "wage share"). In addition, low pay is on the increase in many countries. The latest developments, as documented in the ILO's *Global Wage Report 2010/2011* (ILO 2010), have brought back to the agenda the

question of the macro-economic effects of wages. Did wage moderation and growing inequality prior to the crisis depress aggregate demand, forcing central banks to keep interest rates low and contributing to the “debt-led consumption model” that ultimately proved unsustainable? What are the key explanatory factors underlying the recent trends in wage share and wage inequality and, more significantly, the notable variations across countries? Looking forward, what kind of policies and institutions are needed to prevent a spiral of stagnating wages, weak aggregate demand and Japan-style deflationary traps? More generally, what conditions should be in place to create the virtuous cycle of wages and economic growth often characterised as “wage-led” growth?

Papers are invited for this track that focus on the measurement of aggregate wage trends, the macroeconomic effects of wages and/or the policy options that will promote a model of economic growth based on solid growth in wages and income. The issue of wage inequality (including low pay) can also be explored in this respect. Papers which examine developments since the beginning of the crisis and provide new insights on wage policies are particularly welcome. Papers are also encouraged to examine related policy issues, including collective bargaining, minimum wages, wage subsidies, in-work benefits and other income support policies, and to consider how these policies can be designed to ensure complementarity (rather than trade-offs) between the range of policy objectives.

Track 4 Enforcing Decent Work

Political and legal recognition of labour rights and standards, whether at the national or international level, are only part of what is needed to pursue the goal of decent work for all. Without effective implementation and enforcement of labour regulation, workers will continue to experience discrimination, poverty and social exclusion; protective legislation and policies will only exist ‘on the books’. Nor will labour regulation, as a driver of improved job quality and decent work, be able to play its role in forming the basis for sustainable economic development. In the context of the ongoing global financial crisis, enforcement has taken on new significance. It is essential to ensure that workers are not exploited by employers seeking to cut costs in the face of challenging economic circumstances. It is also essential if labour regulation is to contribute positively to an economically sustainable recovery.

Recent studies have shown that inadequate enforcement of labour regulation is a significant problem in both industrialised and developing economies. There are many reasons for this, including gaps in the scope of protective labour regulation, inadequate resourcing of state labour inspectorates, and weak or non-existent trade unions. At the same time, however, there is an emerging story of innovation and reinvestment in labour inspection and enforcement. This has been accompanied by greater interest in how more effective enforcement can benefit economic growth and development. Some innovative enforcement approaches have been implemented by state inspectorates, while others combine state enforcement

mechanisms with 'private' enforcement mechanisms, such as corporate codes of conduct and multi-stakeholder arrangements.

Papers submitted under this track could therefore address one or more of the following issues and questions: the problem and extent of non-compliance with labour and employment regulation and its causes; responses to non-compliance - labour inspection systems, tools, and sanctions; innovations in monitoring and enforcement of labour regulation, including the role of non-state actors such as trade unions, NGOs, and quasi-state actors (e.g., community legal clinics); the contribution of labour inspection and enforcement to sustainable economic development.

Comparative studies, as well as studies focussing on compliance and enforcement in industries in which workers are in precarious and non-standard forms of employment, are also welcome. So too are papers which consider how labour regulation may be best designed so as to promote effective implementation and enforcement.

Planned Special Sessions

New Evidence on the Effects of Labour Regulations: Similarities and Contrasts across Regions

These Special Sessions welcome papers that discuss new evidence on the economic, social and labour market effects of labour regulations. Debates on the effects of labour legislation spread across the different world regions generating in the last two decades a considerable number of studies that assessed impacts of regulations varying in the incentives/constraints directed at employers and workers. This vast corps of knowledge, nonetheless, has been unable as yet to really tilt the balance to one side or the other. In this context, one central aim of these Special Sessions is to contrast new evidence, for different regions and economic and institutional settings, which would help to reach a better understanding of the role of labour law in the determination of employment, wages and inequality in high- and low-income economies.

Papers submitted to these Special Sessions are expected to address issues such as: economic and/or labour market impacts of employment protection legislation; whether the constraints imposed by labour regulations contribute to explain the degree of non-compliance with legislation or the incidence of precarious employment and informal contractual relations; the extent to which trade union wage regulation and/or state wage administration have moderating/intensifying effects on pay inequality; minimum wage effects on pay inequality, employment and unemployment.

Empirical studies undertaken from different disciplinary perspectives, and either focusing on one country or presenting comparative research results, are welcome.

Papers will be grouped in two or three sessions, depending on the number of abstracts received.

Guidelines for abstracts

- Abstracts should be in English and a maximum of 400 words including references and appendices.
- Each abstract should include:
 - paper title;
 - names and institutional affiliations of all authors;
 - contact address and email of the correspondence author;
 - proposed Conference track or the planned Special Session.
- Abstracts should be submitted as a single-spaced *Word* document formatted to A4 size in 12 point Arial font.
- Abstracts that fail to meet these requirements may not be considered.
- Guidelines for final papers will be communicated to the authors of selected abstracts.

Proposals for special sessions

Special Sessions devoted to existing research projects or specific themes are also encouraged. The Special Sessions should be international in content. They will be 90 minutes in length and involve at least three presenters, a chair and a discussant if preferred.

Abstracts should describe the session as a whole. It is not necessary to identify a Conference track.

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 to fund the travel costs of authors of selected papers who are based in developing countries (see "RDW Fellowships" below). Interest in these funds should be indicated in the abstract proposal.

RDW fellowships

A unique aspect of the RDW Conference is the genuine effort to create an environment for global research dialogue, especially between industrialized and developing countries. In this respect, a fellowship fund has been established to support researchers from developing countries who may otherwise be prevented from attending. Interested researchers are strongly encouraged to submit their abstracts no later than 31 December 2010 (please note that this deadline for submission is one month earlier than the general deadline). Successful applicants will receive

fellowship grants to an amount determined by the estimated cost of travel and other expenses.

Conference Organizing Committee

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Further information

Further details will be available at the Conference websites:

<http://rdw.law.unimelb.edu.au> (under construction)

or,

<http://www.ilo.org/public/english/protection/condtrav/publ/rdw.htm>

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