

## Call for Abstracts

The 7th 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 Instituut (AIAS-HSI)* – University of Amsterdam, Netherlands  
*Centre for Employment and Labour Relations Law (CELRL)* – University of Melbourne, Australia  
*Centre for Informal Sector and Labour Studies (CISLS)* – Jawaharlal Nehru University, India  
*Durham Law School (DLS)* – University of Durham, UK  
*Industrial and Labour 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  
*Work and Equalities Institute (WEI)* – University of Manchester, UK

### ***COVID-19 and the world of work: Towards a human-centred recovery***

**Virtual Conference**  
**International Labour Office**  
**Geneva, Switzerland**  
**6–9 July 2021**

[www.ilo.org/rdw2021](http://www.ilo.org/rdw2021)

The COVID-19 pandemic is causing immense disruptions to the world of work, which had already been under great strain due to profound changes in technology, globalization, demographics, climate and the environment, as well as other global trends. While the full impacts of the COVID-19 crisis on workers and businesses will be revealed in the years to come, the evidence so far suggests a wide range of formidable policy challenges.

Above all, the scale of labour market disruption is *massive* and *unprecedented*. ILO estimates show that in 2020 the pandemic brought working hours down by 8.8 per cent, which is equivalent to 255 million full-time jobs (assuming 48 working hours per week). This scale of the loss was four times greater than during the global financial crisis in 2009. In this crisis, job losses translated mainly into rising inactivity rather than unemployment. Working-hours are expected to stay well below the pre-pandemic level for an extended period of time.

The job crisis is genuinely *global* in that it affects all countries, but at the same time is *uneven* as there are large variations between countries. Lower-middle-income countries in particular were hit hard, while their

resources for policy actions were severely limited. As a consequence of the uneven impact there are concerns that this crisis will widen inequality between countries.

Similarly, the pandemic has affected workers and businesses to differing degrees. Young people, women and care workers, as well as migrant, low-paid, low-skilled, precarious and informal workers, have been taking a disproportionate share of the impact, while some other groups have been only minimally affected or have even profited from the crisis. Precarious, low-paid workers, including those in the platform economy, often did not benefit from protection measures, while high-paid workers in finance and technology remained largely unaffected. At the same time, many small and medium-sized enterprises have also faced significant challenges from the crisis, especially with regard to business continuity, while some larger enterprises, particularly large technological companies, have thrived. The current crisis has laid bare the unequal structure of the labour market today and the uneven impact risks widening and deepening the gaps during the recovery process.

There are also questions as to whether these disruptions will be temporary or structural. Early evidence shows that many jobs which have been lost will not return, while sectoral changes are inevitable. This implies that large-scale labour market transitions for workers may have to take place during the recovery.

Given that the recovery will likely be uneven and uncertain, it is imperative to ensure broad-based human-centred recovery from COVID-19 through employment, income and social protection policies, that promote workers' rights, gender, race and other forms of equality and social dialogue for all.

## CONFERENCE THEMES

The 7th Regulating for Decent Work (RDW) Conference will examine the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the world of work and discuss policy and regulatory measures to mitigate such impacts and facilitate a robust and inclusive recovery for all.

The 7th RDW Conference will be different from our previous conferences. This time it will be held virtually on 6–9 July 2021 from 2 p.m. to 6 p.m. (Central European Time) each day. The Conference will be on a smaller scale than previous ones, with three regular sessions per day and no parallel sessions.

In addition to the regular afternoon session, each day will have a session focusing on a particular region (Asia, Africa, Europe and Latin America). The regional session on Latin America will be in Spanish. Papers submitted with a country or region focus could be scheduled for the relevant regional session.

As the Conference will be **virtual**, we are not planning to award the RDW Fellowship in 2021. Instead, we will organise two young scholars' sessions on 7 and 8 July to give an opportunity to young researchers who are doing their Ph.D. or those who have completed their Ph.D. in the past five years, to present their ongoing research covering any of the specific themes of the Conference.

Apart from the two plenaries and two young scholars' sessions, there will be eight 90-minute regular sessions and four 90-minute regional sessions with four papers in each session.

Each day of the Conference will focus on a specific theme:

### ***6 July: Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the world of work in 2020–21***

This theme invites papers that assess the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on different groups of workers such as youth, women, migrants, and those in the informal economy or non-standard work arrangements including platform workers. We invite papers that are based on new data, which analyse how the pandemic has affected these varied groups of workers in terms of their participation in the labour market, their income, their social protection and their working conditions. Papers may also consider the implications for inequality, and can examine the transition of workers between labour-market states and sectors.

### ***7 July: Labour and social protection policies in the crisis response***

This theme invites papers that explore the range of labour and social protection policies implemented to mitigate the effects of the crisis. These include wage policies; working arrangements, such as teleworking; measures to promote occupational safety and health; health protection and access to health care; sickness benefits; job-retention schemes; unemployment benefits and other income support measures; and training and reskilling employment subsidies. We particularly welcome papers that rely on primary data analysis and which provide empirical support for (or against) the effectiveness of specific policy measures and lessons for possible future design.

### ***8 July: Governance, regulation, and collective bargaining***

This theme invites papers that examine the governance and regulation of work during the COVID-19 pandemic. The theme assumes that governance and regulation of work are a state responsibility, but can take place through both public and private action, including collective bargaining, other forms of social dialogue, and private governance regimes. We invite papers that explore how existing institutions and modes of governance of work have been used to shape policy responses during the pandemic. They may also consider the impact of the pandemic on the governance of work: that is, papers may consider how existing institutions and modes of governance have adapted or evolved, and/or identify examples of new approaches that have emerged.

### ***9 July: The post COVID-19 world of work: In search of a human-centred recovery***

The ILO Centenary Declaration on the Future of Work called for ensuring that all people benefit from the changing world of work and for no one to be left behind. Just one year later, the COVID-19 pandemic laid bare weaknesses in governance and the critical policy gaps that have resulted in extreme suffering throughout the world. With a view to containing and mitigating such hardship in the future, this theme welcomes papers that explore new approaches to the governance of economies and labour markets (for example, new approaches to social dialogue or workplace democracy, including cooperatives) as well as a wide range of policy measures – from macro-level (public investment, debt restructuring and forgiveness)

and sectoral (including the care economy and a just transition) interventions, to specific labour and social protection policies – that can help bring about a human-centred world of work.

The Conference will be co-hosted by the University of Amsterdam’s Institute for Labour Studies / Hugo Sinzheimer Instituut (AIAS-HSI), the University of Melbourne’s Centre for Employment and Labour Relations Law (CELRL), Jawaharlal Nehru University’s Centre for Informal Sector and Labour Studies (CISLS), Durham Law School, Durham University (DLS), the Cornell University’s Industrial and Labour Relations (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), and the University of Manchester’s Work and Equalities Institute (WEI). Researchers from all regions are welcome to participate, with a particular welcome extended to those from lower-income countries. In past years, the Conference has attracted researchers from a range of fields that include law, economics, industrial relations, development studies and geography.

## DEADLINES

Abstract submission (Papers)	15 April 2021
Communicating acceptance (Papers)	14 May 2021

We encourage participants whose papers have been accepted to submit a draft by 30 June, 2021.

Registration for the Conference will open on Monday, 17 May 2021

## SUBMISSION OF ABSTRACTS

The organizing committee invites you to submit abstracts for the 2021 RDW Conference. We welcome and value submissions from young scholars:

- Abstracts should be in English (with the exception of papers submitted for the regional panel on Latin America, which can also be in Spanish).
- Abstracts must have a maximum of 500 words, and contain 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/rdw2021](http://www.conftool.org/rdw2021)
- The author(s) must indicate their preferred Conference theme.
- **Deadline for abstract submission: 15 April 2021.**

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

Authors can submit only one abstract. Guidelines for final papers can be found on the conference website.

**Please note that as this year’s conference will have only a limited number of sessions each day, the selection process will be extremely rigorous.**

## FEES AND EXPENSES

There will be no fee for conference participants.

## COMMITTEES, NETWORK AND SECRETARIAT

### *RDW Conference Organizing Committee*

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### *RDW Committee*

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### *RDW Network Members*

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**Secretariat:** Laura Finkelstein, ILO, Geneva, Switzerland

## FURTHER INFORMATION

Further details are available at the RDW website: [www.ilo.org/rdw2021](http://www.ilo.org/rdw2021)

For any queries, please contact the Conference Organizing Committee at: [rdw@ilo.org](mailto:rdw@ilo.org)