

## Conference themes

### 1. Quality of working life as a regulatory objective

Wages and hours regulation have become more central to deregulatory discourses in recent years and also feature prominently in research efforts to quantify domestic labour standards and assess their economic impact. Yet simultaneously, the intersection of paid labour and other facets of workers' lives - and in particular their availability to, and support for, their families - is a central feature of social policy debates across industrialized countries and increasingly in other regions. And in the academic realm, the notion of 'quality of work' has experienced a resurgence in recent work, which attends to traditional concerns but also extends to more recently recognised elements of working life such as worker autonomy and control and work intensification. Papers under this theme will explore the role of working conditions regulation in advancing the 'quality of working life' will be explored, in particular by questioning which regulatory models are best suited to this objective. Recent trends in the regulation of wages, working hours and work/family and efforts to quantify working conditions regulations will be analysed.

### 2 New directions in the implementation and enforcement of 'non-core' norms

States face difficult policy choices in developing and enforcing labour regulation to advance labour rights and standards that are not embraced by the 'core' rights set out in the ILO's Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work. Key topics not covered by that Declaration include working time, minimum wages, maternity protection, health and safety, and employment protection and dismissal rights. States must balance the twin - and apparently competing - goals of improving job quality while promoting and rewarding entrepreneurship and economic growth. Moreover they face considerable pressure, particularly from the Bretton Woods institutions, to 'deregulate' their labour markets on the assumption that this will encourage economic development and 'formalisation'. However, there is little evidence that removing labour rights and standards or exempting sectors of the economy from their application has major positive effects in terms of economic growth. On the other hand, it has been argued that a more promising solution is for States to explore innovative approaches to the design, enforcement and observance of 'non-core' labour rights and standards in order to maintain legislative safeguards over the

welfare of individual workers, while also encouraging economic and employment growth. Under this theme it will be explored how non-core labour rights are or can be advanced through innovative and responsive methods of labour regulation and enforcement. Mechanisms shall be considered by which States can better enforce existing labour standards where protection of workers has been undermined by weak enforcement of applicable laws, such as where States employ tripartite and participatory enforcement approaches, education and information campaigns, targeted inspections, and training. Furthermore, this theme addresses innovative approaches to the extension of labour protections to workers who are exempted from legislative measures will be considered (eg. non-standard workers, and workers in Micro and Small Enterprises (MSEs)).

3 Searching for the appropriate labour market regulations for employment promotion and labour market adjustment: when security matters as much as flexibility

Globalization and technological changes have increased competitive pressures on national economies and firms, calling for frequent and rapid adjustment to meet fluctuations in demand and to advance productivity. This need for more flexible labour markets has led to a general agenda of deregulation which has focused on the costs of employment protection legislation ("EPL"). The argument made, in this regard, is that direct costs, such as severance payments, or other procedural requirements in favour of redundant workers, such as assistance in re-employment and funding of labour market training, may have detrimental effects on labour costs, employment and productivity. After decades of both theoretical and empirical research, however, the debate on the effects of hiring and firing rules on labour market outcomes remains inconclusive and academics have failed to reach consensus. The problem may be both methodological (such as the lack of satisfactory EPL measurements) and conceptual (cost-benefits analyses and the role of interactions between the respective institutions that influence labour markets should, for example, be considered critical aspects in the debate). Under this theme it will thus be explored (i) potential alternative models and methodologies that can take into account both costs and benefits; and (ii) the role of ILO Conventions not as constraints on 'doing business,' but as key elements of an integrated approach to enhancing both flexibility and security in the labour market.