

## INTRODUCTION

*I*LR readers have a varied choice in this issue, in line with recent heterogeneous issues. Starting at the theoretical and abstract level, one article considers the reaction of labour law to new forms of corporate organization. This is followed by a topical review of the present state of the Palestinian economy and labour market and their future prospects. Then come two articles approaching the questions of growth, jobs and poverty reduction from opposite angles, as it were: one proposing a macroeconomic policy framework for developing countries' growth, employment and poverty reduction, the other examining closely the characteristics of unemployment, job quality and poverty in Bulgaria, a transition economy.

First, *Marie-Laure Morin* examines how labour law adjusts (or fails to adjust) to new and emerging forms of corporate organization. Labour law was traditionally formed through a gradual process of construction in parallel with that of productive organization itself, and within national boundaries. Today, however, as globalization takes hold, corporate organization is adopting new forms, mostly on an ever-larger and multinational scale, and often displaying greater responsiveness to shareholder demands than to the needs of production. At the other end of the scale, decentralization and the outsourcing of service functions have brought about fragmentation of the productive enterprise. In response to these developments, labour law has been challenged to continue safeguarding the lasting employment relationship and ensuring that the economic and social risks relating to production are shared and that working conditions are protected. The author explores these new challenges and the approaches adopted by national (mostly French) law and European Union directives. These focus on the identification of the employer for the purposes of contractual relationships and on accountability for the conditions in which work is performed.

The second article, by *Philippe Egger*, contains a wealth of information about the Palestinian economy and labour market over the recent past, and the coincidence of these developments with political

events in that part of the world from 1993 onwards. He shows conclusively the sensitivity of the economy and labour market to political developments, notably the surge in investments and growth that accompanied the peace negotiations following the signing of the Oslo accords in September 1993, which then dropped abruptly after the outbreak of the second Intifada in September 2000. He stresses the paramount necessity of attending to the needs of the economy and labour market in parallel with any peace negotiations, and argues that the Palestinian economy should open up to the outside world and focus on exports, instead of depending heavily on the larger Israeli economy and on providing unskilled workers for that economy.

Macroeconomic policies for developing countries are the focus of *Iyanatul Islam's* article. His starting point is that many developing countries are preoccupied with stability at the expense of growth, and with fiscal and inflation targets at the expense of employment. Tracing these preoccupations back to their origins in the Washington Consensus, which ranked fiscal prudence as topmost priority and ranked full employment nowhere, the author argues that there is a viable alternative to this orthodoxy, one that renews a commitment to employment creation as a core goal of macroeconomic policy and creates "fiscal space" to sustain investments in infrastructure and human development. Comprehensive social protection is also needed to deal with the economic insecurity engendered by macroeconomic volatility, as well as an inclusive approach to policy-making and a global environment enabling pro-poor and employment-friendly national policy initiatives.

The last of the four articles is by *Alexandre Kolev*, who examines closely the data on unemployment, job quality and poverty in Bulgaria and provides revealing insights into the social realities of transition. His overall aims are to ascertain the multiple aspects of vulnerability in Bulgaria's labour market, to explore how it relates to both income and non-income poverty and to identify the groups most at risk of poor labour market outcomes. For, whereas economic reforms in Bulgaria had resulted in improved economic conditions and the stabilization of income poverty after 1997, overall poverty increased over the 1995-2001 period. The poor labour market prospects of many vulnerable groups led to disproportionately high risks of income and non-income poverty. The author concludes with specific proposals in the different policy areas concerned.

This issue's book reviews concern two French books. The first contains rich offerings on the history of working time, and the widely different motives that drove efforts to reduce it. Of particular interest is the chapter concerning the period immediately after the First World War, when the debate became internationalized and, of course, the ILO played a major role notably through its first Convention which concerned this question. The other book reviewed is the result of a multidisciplinary ex-

change focusing on the actors who shaped the history of labour law, mostly in France.

*Recent books* reported on concern Swiss labour law and practice, teleworking, individualism and work-based social bonding, globalization and the welfare state, imperfect competition in labour markets, the role of private enterprise in poverty reduction in developing countries, labour relations in Venezuela and, finally, a critical take on the Millennium Development Goals (edited by the splendidly named Black and White).

Recent ILO publications include International Labour Conference reports on the application of international labour standards, and this year's General Survey on hours of work; the report of a tripartite meeting on how trends in the automotive industry affect component suppliers; the Director-General's report to the Seventh European Regional meeting, on managing transitions and governance for decent work; new forms of work in a globalized world; a report on the employment relationship for discussion by the International Labour Conference in June 2006; and finally, in CD-ROM the *Yearbook of Labour Statistics 2004*, the first ten volumes of *Sources and methods: Labour statistics*, and the *October Inquiry results: Statistics on occupational wages and hours of work and on food prices*.

Regular readers will also note that, with this first issue of 2005, the *Review* sports a new cover.

