

Editorial

Beryl ter Haar, Emanuele Menegatti,
Iacopo Senatori, Elena Sychenko*

This special issue of the *Italian Labour Law e-Journal* intends to contribute to the on-going discussion about the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the social policies of the states and to provide a systematic and informative overview on the measures set out by national governments.

While these measures have a drastic impact on the work of people and on business operations, they should also be understood as part of a broader strategy that encompasses public health and macro-economic concerns.

Although the precautions suggested by the epidemiologic science to mitigate the spread of the disease, like for example social distancing, are the same worldwide, national governments and legislators are translating them into specific policies and normative solutions, in different attempts to balance health and economic interests. Hence, it is important to explore differences and similarities, with a view to identifying diverging patterns and common trends.

For instance, it is useful to understand whether the provisions enacted in different systems take into account the different degrees of vulnerability and exposure to risks of the working population. One may note in this regard that workers in essential services, inevitably not involved in the lockdown measures, first and foremost health workers, as well as informal workers are facing increased health and safety risks in the short run. On the other hand, those employed in businesses subject to authoritative closures are risking displacement and loss of employment in the medium run, if the production and commercial operations will not be soon resumed.

Another interesting issue to address is which different normative techniques and lawmaking procedures have been put into practice, including variations in the involvement of social partners.

Finally, it may be instructive to observe the different degrees of readiness shown by the ordinary toolkits of labour law and industrial relations in responding and adapting to the emergency in different countries. In other words, to find whether and to what extent the established body of laws is proving able to cope with the problems raised by the current

* Beryl ter Haar, Assistant Professor, Universiteit Leiden; Emanuele Menegatti, Professor of Labour Law, University of Bologna; Iacopo Senatori, Senior Researcher of Labour Law, Marco Biagi Foundation – University of Modena and Reggio Emilia; Elena Sychenko, Associate Professor, Saint Petersburg State University.

extraordinary situation or whether, on the contrary, new special regulations are being introduced.

Likely this experience will leave legislators, practitioners and interpreters a legacy that may be used as ground work for a future labour law, more responsive and effective. However, before engaging in any theoretical discussion, it is crucial to collect a consistent amount of data and information.

Against such background, this special issue presents an overview of the labour law norms, institutions and workplace arrangements that are being deployed in the different legal systems to cope with the global health crisis. The reports presented here will shed light in particular on the measures enacted to tackle the following problems:

- The effects of interruption of business operations on employment (e.g. income support for temporarily unemployed persons; job-saving provisions).
- The risks on workers' health and safety (e.g. social distancing and other workplace arrangements aimed at preventing the risk of infection, use of remote work and other alternatives to commuting).
- The increased caregiving duties due to school closures or daycare services stoppages (e.g. parental leaves; economic support to buy alternative care services).
- The conditions of particularly vulnerable workers (e.g. self-employed, freelancers, domestic workers, informal and casual workers).

We hope that the data collected thanks to the prompt and generous contributions of our distinguished colleagues from all world continents will form the basis for a further reflection about the long-term impact of Covid-19 upon labour regulations and about the lessons learnt through this emergency.

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