

# Editorial

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This issue of the ILLeJ is opened by a thematic session dedicated to the systemic challenges that labour law is facing, as the world enters its third year into the new era ideally opened by the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic. In this sense, it is linked to the two Special Issues that the Journal dedicated to Covid-19 and Labour Law. A Global Review and The NextGeneration EU in Action: Impact on Social and Labour Policies, respectively in 2020 and earlier this year.

It is a common understanding that the pandemic operated as a magnifying lens, revealing the structural problems that affect the world of work and society at large. One of its side-effects has been the activation of new intellectual and political energies, in the effort to rethink the aims, values and priorities attached to the employment relationship, the labour market and the regulation of the two.

The experience of the past three years has shown us plastically that the instability brought about by natural and social risks is an inherent feature of contemporary society. At the same time, it has emphasized the need to balance fairly an intricate web of conflicting rights, liberties and interests: a perspective which in turn puts a renovated light on the essential role and responsibility of the State and the other regulatory agencies at any level.

The measures experimented during the past three years, largely adopted under the pressure of a state of emergency of an unprecedented scale, may be soon forgotten or they may leave a legacy, or even represent a model for future initiatives. While the ultimate direction – progressive or regressive – of this process is still unclear, as it will be the outcome of political choices, the path towards a paradigm shift has been set in motion irrevocably.

The international conference “Work Beyond the Pandemic. Towards a Human-Centred Recovery”, hosted by the Marco Biagi Foundation of the University of Modena and Reggio Emilia in May 2022, has been an opportunity to identify and discuss in a comprehensive manner the problems that the pandemic has created or exacerbated and the solutions envisaged, in theory and practice, with a view to relaunching a reflection on work and its protection as a means of social and human development, both in an emergency context and in a long-term perspective.

The contributions included in this thematic session were originally presented in the conference. They address crucial topics that the pandemic has put under stress, such as gender equality, flexible work arrangements, income support and health and safety in the work environment.

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We hope that they will add new and interesting perspectives to the crucial debate on the role of Labour Law in the path towards human development and sustainability.

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