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## Guest Editorial. Vulnerabilities and the Transition

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Vulnerabilities and the Transition are at the forefront of this Issue, which is mainly based on the materials presented at the International Conference on “*Employment, Labour and Welfare in the Sustainable Transition*”, held in Trento in May 2022. The Conference was one of the outcomes of *Financial Innovation for Active Welfare Policies*, a Jean Monnet Project we carried out as Principal Investigators, to examine innovative instruments for fostering socially and financially sustainable welfare models.

In this introduction, our aim is to give a brief explanation of the reasons that led to this initiative, which explores key aspects of labour market interventions and social policies.

The initial premise regards the uneven impact of the pandemic among workers and jobseekers. Vulnerable groups, such as women, migrants and young people – often unemployed, or employed in economic sectors with low wages and precarious working conditions – were the most severely affected, which exacerbated the labour market dualism. But somehow paradoxically, the pandemic had also positive impacts on innovation and investment in labour laws and policy.

The European Union, and Member States, have adopted comprehensive strategies to address the socio-economic impact of the pandemic. Many of the established measures, although exceptional, have reshaped structures of work models, labour markets, and welfare systems. Within the Next Generation EU framework, European and national institutions aimed to further pursue this legacy, in order to foster the post-pandemic recovery and to support the Transition. To ensure a sustainable Transition, however, laws, policies and all the adopted concrete solutions should be closely linked to social equity and vulnerability protection goals. In brief, and to highlight the point: how to protect vulnerabilities and how to balance the digital and the environmental dimensions in the post-pandemic world is going to be more than crucial. This balance is a critical challenge for every legal system in Europe, and beyond it. What is still lacking is a more accurate attention on how these challenges relate to each other. What explanations and solutions are needed, for example, when we think of vulnerabilities and transitions not simply as parallel processes, but as transformations that can and should deeply affect each other?

To answer this and any consequential questions, in this Issue innovative techniques and good (but also bad) practices, developed to address new and old vulnerabilities, are brought to the attention of scholars and policymakers. Sara Prosdocimi, for example, suggests an assessment of the situation of collective bargaining within specific sectors, to investigate the role of industrial relations systems in the environmental transition. Giorgio Impellizzeri

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explores the lifelong learning system in Italy, and Massimiliano De Falco analyses the topic of labour market policies, considering the needs of vulnerable groups, including young people and workers with disabilities. Along these lines, considering the broader framework of the topic, we shift the focus to the false promise of green jobs and the greening opportunities of active labour market policies all around Europe (Riccardo Salomone). We then examine the blue transition, analysing the implications of the spreading of new navigation technologies to investigate the possible developments of the sea-to-land transitions (Camilla Faggioni).

As for the digital perspective, readers shall find three specific contributions. Chiara Cristofolini provides a first assessment of the impact of the long-awaited EU Artificial Intelligence Act (EU AI Act) on workers protection, highlighting how the integration of AI in the workplace may enhance working conditions, but also exacerbate existing vulnerabilities. Based on this premise, Cristofolini examines the strengths and loopholes of the Final Provisional Text in the promotion of a trustworthy AI. Anna Bebbler considers the role of public employment services, with a focus on profiling procedures. This type of procedure represents one of the most sensitive processes to AI: by examining three different European contexts (Flanders, the Netherlands, and Italy), Bebbler highlights the positive impacts and potential drawbacks of digitalisation in such a complex area. Luigi Di Cataldo presents a comment on the recent agreement reached on the European Directive on platform work, discussing the positions advocated by the European institutions in defining the strategy for improving working conditions within digital platforms.

Lastly, the major issue addressed by Rita Daila Costa and Marino Pezzolo is the protection of migrant workers, focusing on the phenomenon of undocumented migration in Italy. From a legal perspective, Costa investigates all the concrete risks of increasing migrants' vulnerabilities. On the grounds of interesting data and figures, Pezzolo illustrates how the perception of immigration as a problem had diminished consequently to the spread of the pandemic. However, in terms of law and policy actions, considerable progress is still required.

In this context, the collection of contributions presented herein offers a comprehensive view of the intersections of digitalisation, climate change, and vulnerabilities, elucidating the developments and challenges presented by the current fast-changing environment. We hope to give a glimpse of something optimistic for the future of labour regulation. In any case, we express our gratitude to the editors for the opportunity of contributing to this Issue of the *ILLeJ*.

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