

XIV Global Labour University Conference

Reflecting 100 years of ILO – Shaping the rules for a new century of labour

Berlin School of Economics and Law, International Center for Development and Decent Work (ICDD), Friedrich Ebert Stiftung
Berlin, March 27-29, 2019

Call for papers

The International Labour Organization (ILO) is celebrating its first 100 years at a time when labour is under massive attack. On the one hand, business and governments are pushing for new trade and investment agreements that provide for more rights for corporations at the expense of citizens as workers, consumers and at times at the cost of natural environment. On the other hand, an increasing number of governments are violating workers' rights, curtailing some of the hard-won social gains by authoritarian means and undermining democratic principles. As governments hold half of the votes in the ILO and capital another quarter, labour is also on the defensive within the ILO.

Without the ILO setting international labour rights and standards for 100 years, the conditions for labour would undoubtedly look worse today. However, labour faces a double challenge. Defensively, global and national rules curtailing its rights as well as the threat of erosion of the ILO as a rights-based and standard setting organization need to be fought. Offensively, the changing world of work with automation and digital technology needs new rules and enforcement mechanisms to defend and create decent working and living conditions, democratic societies as well as a sustainable future of the planet.

Against this background, the Global Labour University (GLU) wants to invite labour activists and academics to contribute to the global discourse on what kinds of new global rules are necessary, what role the ILO is expected to play in a system of global governance, and how we can strengthen international labour solidarity to obtain the rules needed.

We propose the following working tracks which are expected to bring to the fore proposals of the GLU network and invite papers, think pieces or propositions on the following themes:

1. ***Instruments for Strengthening Global Labour:*** Today's world economy is dominated by global companies and their value chains that are associated with the violation of labour rights and precarious work. Consequently, more binding regulation has been demanded. What should such binding obligations for transnational corporations regulate? How can these obligations be translated into (what) new transnational labour relations? What new forms of (transnational) collective bargaining can be envisaged (sectoral agreements; triangular bargaining; international framework agreements)? How can we strengthen labour solidarity (including new forms of solidarity organisations) across borders to build effective transnational industrial relations? Which new strategies for organizing across borders do we need? How can gender needs be integrated?
2. ***Representation of Informally or Precariously Employed Workers:*** An increasing number of workers are informally or precariously employed, with the emerging platform/gig economy exacerbating

these trends. How can we ensure that these platforms are regulated so that they ensure minimum working conditions to the workers? How to ensure there is social dialogue among different actors engaged in digital economy? How can these workers represent their interests and guard their rights? What kind of institutional settings can secure their voice? How can employment relationships be shaped to guarantee workers' rights? What international, national or local rules and practices have actually worked for informalized or precarious workers? How do/ should such rules/practices contribute to gender equality? Which successful organizing strategies have informally and precariously employed women developed in recent years?

3. **Trade and Investment Regimes:** New international agreements such as Transpacific Partnership (TPP light), the EU-Japan Economic Partnership Agreement or the proposed E-commerce Agenda of the WTO are going to infringe on democratic/ regulatory space, workers' rights and working conditions. Shall labour reject these agreements completely, or are there ways to change these regimes in favour of labour? What is labour's agenda to shape trade rules that work for workers everywhere and create a level playing field, especially for developing countries? How can such policy fields be integrated into national and global trade union strategies? In how far do they affect gender relations? What are the implications of de-globalisation on labour?
4. **Economic and Social Upgrading in Global Value Chains:** Economic growth has long been considered a precondition for development especially from mainstream economists. What are the different perspectives for economic upgrading against the background of increasing socio-economic inequalities all around the world? Are there strategies to achieve equitable and ecologically sustainable growth, and employment in favour of workers and in how far can such strategies be inclusive especially from a perspective of the Global South? What are the strategies to ensure compliance in labour regulations and international labour standards to ensure decent work in supply chains? Moreover, research has shown that there is no automatic link between economic and social upgrading. What kind of social upgrading (e.g. considering different lines of inequality such as gender, race/ethnicity, socio-ecological inequality etc.) do we need and how can this be promoted along Global Value Chains? How to develop strategies and mechanisms to ensure workplace compliance in cross-border sourcing of goods and services? What role can social dialogue play in ensuring decent work for all?
5. **Just Transition:** There is an increasing awareness of the uneven social and geographical distribution of the responsibility for, and the consequences of the environmental crisis. Workers, particularly in the global South, have a much smaller ecological footprint than middle- and upper-class people. At the same time, they are more vulnerable to environmental crisis phenomena. What can we learn from experiences and strategies that treat the crisis of nature and the crisis of justice as closely interrelated? How could they be strengthened by national and international rules of a just transition to a sustainable society and how can this field be integrated into trade union strategies?

We encourage submission of papers that fit into the themes. To a limited extent, we will also consider papers that do not fit directly into one of the themes but address the broad focus of the conference. Please indicate which theme your paper addresses with your abstract submission. The GLU encourages policy-orientated research and therefore welcomes submissions that not only analyze problems, but also offer some policy initiatives and solutions for debate.

Please send a one-page abstract (which includes your methodological approach) **by November 15, 2018** to Harald Kröck <harald.kroeck@global-labour-university.org>.