

**19<sup>th</sup> World Congress  
International Labour & Employment Relations Association  
June 21-25, 2021  
Lund, Sweden**

**Study Group on Public Policy and Industrial Relations**

**Call for Papers/Presentations**

The Study Group on Public Policy and Industrial Relations will meet during the 19<sup>th</sup> World Congress to be held in Lund, Sweden during June 21-25, 2021. Proposals are welcome on all aspects of public policy in the area of industrial relations, labour markets, labour-management relations, skill development, active labour market policies, immigration and migration policies, social security, informality in the labour market, wage-setting, etc.

At this forthcoming Congress, our focus will be specifically on **public policy responses (or lack thereof) to the issue of growing informality** in labour markets world-wide (ILO 2018a). A special priority is to focus on the COVID-19 pandemic and the manner in which it has exposed the vital support provided by the informal sector to the overall economy. The need to protect the most vulnerable workers has been clear for a long time but it is in such catastrophic contexts that we have come to understand that the most essential tasks are being performed by workers in the informal economy.

Informality can be viewed through two lenses. The “*old*” informality exists in the form of work and employment which was never covered under labour law. This type of informality characterizes and dominates the labour markets of developing economies (ILO 2018b). The challenge for policy in this context is to create new regulations that would “fit” the specific features of that industry or occupation. The “*new*” informality comes from the many jobs that used to be formal but have been pushed towards informality by enabling technology, globalization, employer policies and inadequate public policy responses to these trends. This form of regression from formality to informality can be found in both high-wage and low-wage economies (ILO 2018b). The challenge for this type of growing informality is to re-imagine regulation from first principles such that all workers receive protection under the law irrespective of the specific work or employment arrangement in which they may find themselves.

Both forms of informality, *old* or *new*, have been exposed as the weak links in the economic and social fabric of modern societies during the COVID-19 crisis. How are we to prepare for a post-pandemic world in terms of policy responses to ensure that the most essential tasks are performed during a crisis and that workers on whose shoulders we ride to a recovery, are recognized for their contributions?

Regardless of where and how it happens, informality is dysfunctional for all actors in the industrial relations system: workers have fewer protections and lower income, investment

in skills lags and the society and economy remain trapped in a state of development well below their potential. The ILO has focused its efforts in recent years on persuading member states to adopt policies to reduce informality (ILO 2015, 2020).

Papers that compare policy developments in more than one jurisdiction are of special interest given the international composition of our study group.

Papers may cover some of the following themes, among others. This list is only suggestive, not exhaustive.

- a. Historical overviews of policy development addressing informality.
- b. Recent changes (in the last ten years) in regulation aimed at informal workers or sectors.
- c. Labour market outcomes in trends in informal work and employment.
- d. Assessing effectiveness of certain policies aimed at reducing the adverse impact of informality on workers, organizations, labour organizations, society and economy.
- e. Innovative proposals for regulatory reform to address informality.
- f. Regulations aimed at some specific group of workers, e.g., platform-based workers, contract workers, casual and seasonal workers, migrant workers (temporary or permanent immigrants), women workers in traditional sectors such as domestic work, caregiving, home-based garment production, etc.
- g. Policies aimed at specific sectors and industries where informality may be high traditionally or has grown in recent years due to changes in technology, globalization, demographic changes, etc.

Please send an abstract of no more than 300 words to one of the coordinators listed below. Proposals should be sent by 01 March 2021. Early submissions are encouraged so that early acceptances can be mailed out to facilitate advance travel planning.

Plans are being made to publish the papers, subject to peer review, as a book. All papers completed by the time of the World Congress would be considered automatically.

Please note that in order to present your work at the Congress, everyone is required to register for the conference. For details of the World Congress, please go to:

Please e-mail proposals to:

**Anil Verma**, University of Toronto: [anil.verma@rotman.utoronto.ca](mailto:anil.verma@rotman.utoronto.ca)

**Serafino Negrelli**, University of Milano-Bicocca: [serafino.negrelli@unimib.it](mailto:serafino.negrelli@unimib.it)

#### **References:**

**ILO (2015).** [R204 - Transition from the Informal to the Formal Economy Recommendation, 2015 \(No. 204\)](#)

**ILO (2018a).** [Women and men in the informal economy: A statistical picture. Third edition](#)

**ILO (2018b).** [Informality and non-standard forms of employment](#). Prepared for the G20 Employment Working Group meeting 20-22 February 2018, Buenos Aires

**ILO (2020).** [Transition to formality: Transition to Formality and Structural Transformation: Challenges and Policy Options](#)