

Editorial

The increasing internationalisation of the economy and major challenges arising from outsourcing and demographic trends are leading to a progressive interdependence of national economies, highlighting the differences in standards and values between one system and another. As a result benchmarking takes on a particular importance, as seen in a number of papers in this issue exploring institutions of labour law and industrial relations from the comparative point of view in the economic, social and legal context.

The first article, by Kees Vos, provides a comparison between the European social model and that of the US. Analysing the various elements of the models such as job creation and labour market policies, the modernisation of social protection arrangements, social cohesion and social dialogue, the author argues that there are evident trends towards an 'Americanisation' of the European social model that can be explained by the challenges imposed by globalisation and ageing. In the author's view, in Europe the two models increasingly meet and mix.

Claudia-Yvette Matthes and Peggy Terletzki focus on the role of tripartism in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe with regard to its role in stabilisation policy. The authors analyse the factors conditioning the various types of tripartism. In their view it can develop over time with the changing socio-economic context but in any case tripartism plays an importance role as a long-term strategy.

Gudrun Biffl and Joe Isaac undertake an ambitious task in investigating compliance by ILO members with labour standards in such spheres as trade union rights. Taking into account the lack of enforcement powers, the authors ask a legitimate question about whether these standards are adequate or whether they need to be re-examined in order to adjust them to a more realistic level.

David Cabrelli makes a comparison between the covenant of good faith and fair dealing in the UK and US legal systems. The author provides an account of the historical, economic and social context of the implied covenant and on the basis of this analysis he examines what each jurisdiction might learn from the other.

Chris Briggs deals with the problem of lockouts in various national systems. Analysing various proposed classifications and pointing out their inadequacy, he advocates a new cross-national classification of lockout regimes based on prohibition, pluralist regulation and neo-liber-

alism. The author stresses the role of lockouts in the functioning of labour law and employment relations, which brings him to a conclusion about their role in reshaping labour-management power relations.

In their paper Richard Croucher and Clare Kelliher examine flexible working time arrangements in Britain, exploring the impact of this legislation on employer practice. Analysing some shortcomings of the law, the authors note that the effect of legislation has been greater than critics predicted, and in general the law has given a positive impetus to the trend towards employee-friendly flexibility already apparent in some companies.

Finally, the Documentation and Comments section contains a report by William Bromwich and Olga Rymkevitch with an overview of the annual conference in commemoration of Professor Marco Biagi on 'The Lisbon Strategy, Human Capital and Organisational Innovation' held by the Marco Biagi Foundation in Rome in March 2005.

OLGA RYMKEVITCH
MARLENE SCHMIDT
MICHELE TIRABOSCHI