

Editorial

The discussion on discrimination in the last issue continues in this issue from a different standpoint, with a paper by Yaroslau Kryvoi on recent legal developments in Belarus. By means of a careful analysis of the political, legal and historical situation, the author highlights the dramatic gap between the legislation in force, that at first sight appears to comply with international labour standards, and actual employment conditions. He then goes on to examine the reasons for this gap, paying particular attention to security of employment, which is being undermined by the improper use of new forms of work organisation and workplace discrimination for political reasons. The case of Belarus is emblematic as the country is still in transition from a Soviet-style industrial relations system and has not yet achieved a system based on democratic values.

Though clearly not comparable with the situation in Belarus, changes in work organisation are also a problem that EU Member States need to face within the European Employment Strategy. The influence of work organisation on employment and the role of the social partners in this area is analysed in the Greek context by Christos Ioannou. Among the main factors contributing to the overall lack of progress in Greece with regard to the Lisbon objectives, in particular the adaptability pillar, the author points to the lack of coordination of national and European policies for new forms of work organisation, as well as the role played by the social partners, that often take defensive rather than constructive bargaining positions with regard to new forms of work organisation.

The measurement of labour standards across different national contexts gives rise to methodological problems that are examined by Marco Michelotti and Chris Nyland. Starting from a critique of the model proposed by Block, Roberts and Clarke, they compare labour standards in Australia, not at a single point in time, but within a dynamic process. The authors argue that statistical results need to be analysed in the light of the regulatory trends and enforcement levels in each country. This paper will be seen as a further contribution to the elaboration of universal criteria for the measurement of labour standards both in a cross-national and a diachronic perspective.

In his paper on the Italian labour market, Michele Tiraboschi investigates the problem of youth unemployment, arguing that a central issue is the difficult transition from school, training and higher education to work. As a remedy he argues for the need to improve the quality of education and stresses the central role that universities and university foun-

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dations should play in providing career guidance and work experience opportunities to enable the Italian economy to remain competitive in an increasingly globalised labour market.

The Documentation and Comments section contains two contributions. The first is a report by Alexander Zavgorodny providing an overview of the procedure for the hiring of research and teaching staff in Russia. In fact the changes taking place in this country should not be underestimated. In joining the Bologna process, Russia needs to improve its higher educational system to be able to face the challenges of globalisation and internalisation requiring specialised personnel with the skills needed to operate in global markets.

Finally, William Bromwich and Olga Rymkevitch report on the international conference on “Age, Ageing and Ageism in Working Life” organised by the Marco Biagi Foundation and ADAPT in collaboration with the European Commission and the University of Modena and Reggio Emilia in November 2004, issues that if anything have become even more topical in recent months.

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