

## **UNDER PRESSURE OF THE TROIKA - THE IMPACT ON COLLECTIVE LABOUR RIGHTS IN SOUTHERN EUROPE AND IRELAND**

**Presentation title:** Continuity and Change in Joint Regulation in Europe: Structural Reforms and Collective Bargaining

### **Presentation abstract:**

The sovereign debt crisis, which began in Greece in 2010 and then spread to several other euro-zone economies, is having profound consequences for the labour law and industrial relations systems of the debt-affected member states and for the role of law and social policy at EU level. As a result of the austerity measures stipulated in loan agreements and/or recommendations issued by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the European Central Bank (ECB) and the European Commission (EC) – acting often together as the so-called ‘troika’ – essential features of national labour law and industrial relations systems have been, or are in the course of being, radically revised. The austerity measures are aimed not only at ensuring wage moderation but also at changing essential features of industrial relations systems by changing employment protection legislation and collective bargaining. An important issue, thus, is to understand how the policy and legislative changes influence the form of collective bargaining at different levels and shape the content and outcome of collective agreements with regard to specific issues, such as wages and employment conditions and prospects.

With the overarching objective of investigating the impact of the austerity measures implemented in Europe during the crisis, the presentation adopts a comparative approach to examine the process and outcome of these changes in collective bargaining in seven countries: Greece, Ireland, Italy, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia and Spain. Focusing primarily on the developments in the manufacturing sector, it will be argued that three types of systems of collective bargaining are emerging: systems close to collapse, systems in a state of erosion and systems in a state of continuity but also reconfiguration. Three key factors explain the differences and similarities in terms of the impact of the measures on the bargaining systems. The first factor is the pre-existing strength of the bargaining systems, including how well articulated and coordinated they were pre-crisis. The second explaining factor is the extent to which the measures were introduced on the basis of dialogue and deliberation between the two sides of industry and the government. The third factor is the extent and nature of the measures adopted in response to the economic crisis. It will be ultimately suggested that the austerity measures challenge the viability of multi-employer bargaining arrangements as a cornerstone of labour market regulation in Europe: there is a growing question on the functionality of the state in terms of enforcement and monitoring and what is more there is a growing divergence not just between employers and workers – even with the attempts to sustain dialogue in some cases – but also amongst employers and their approaches to regulation.

**Speaker details:**

Aristea Koukiadaki is Senior Lecturer in Employment Law at the University of Manchester. She holds a PhD from Warwick Business School and in the past worked at the Universities of Cambridge, Warwick, Manchester Business School and Lancaster. During part of her research, she was visiting fellow at IDHE (École Normale Supérieure de Cachan, France) and the Uppsala Forum on Peace, Democracy and Justice (University of Uppsala, Sweden). She is currently research associate at the Centre for Business Research (University of Cambridge), the London Centre for Corporate Governance and Ethics (Birkbeck College) and the New Zealand Work and Labour Market Institute (Auckland Technical University). She is a member (non-practising lawyer) of the Iraklio Bar (Greece) and of the Transnational Trade Union Rights Experts of the European Trade Union Institute (ETUI). Aristea's research focuses on the empirical and socio-legal study of law and on applied legal and policy analysis, with particular reference to labour market regulation and EU law and social policy. Her most recent work deals with the effects of the economic crisis on national systems of labour law and industrial relations: in this context, she has co-edited a book (A. Koukiadaki, I. Tavora and M. Martinez-Lucio, *Joint Regulation and Labour Market Policy in Europe during the Crisis*), which will be published in 2015 by the European Trade Union Institute.