CALL FOR PAPERS AND PANELS

Rewarding and Meaningful Work: Fair Wages, Productivity, Job Satisfaction and Redistribution

24th CONFERENCE IN COMMEMORATION OF PROFESSOR MARCO BIAGI

Modena (Italy), 18-19th March 2027

Marco Biagi Foundation - University of Modena and Reggio Emilia

Introduction

The relationship between the quality of work and its remuneration has become a central issue in contemporary labour markets, raising questions about how pay is structured and evaluated across different institutional and organisational contexts. One can observe a sensible increase in income polarization within countries. In many labour markets, the persistence and in some cases the expansion of in-work poverty highlights how employment alone is not always sufficient to guarantee adequate living standards.

In this context, the debate is shifting its focus to include both job creation and the quality of jobs being created and maintained. This requires examining the specific characteristics that define quality employment, both in relation to compensation and to working conditions.

Eurofound defines job quality as the combination of job and employment characteristics that affect workers' health, well-being and prospects. Similarly, the multi-dimensional characterization of job quality has been emphasized by the European Commission in its "Quality Jobs Act" initiative (C(2025) 9944 final) where it is stated that "Job quality is influenced by a number of elements, such as working conditions, health and safety, level of wages, job security, access to training and professional development opportunities, or anticipation and management of change, as well as collective bargaining coverage and social dialogue, work-life balance and equal opportunities".

Particular attention should be devoted to remuneration and job quality within informal, fragmented and transnational production systems, including subcontracting chains, platform-mediated labour and other contexts characterised by weak regulatory protections.

Against this global backdrop, analysing how remuneration systems, wage-setting institutions and organisational practices shape the quality of work becomes a crucial priority for understanding contemporary labour market transformations.

In light of these considerations, the Scientific Committee of the Marco Biagi International Conference is pleased to announce that the 24th edition will be dedicated to the theme "**Rewarding and Meaningful Work: Fair Wages, Productivity, Job Satisfaction and Redistribution**".

The event will open with keynote addresses by distinguished scholars from the fields of labour law, organization studies, and economics.
With the aim of fostering critical and interdisciplinary reflection on how wage-setting mechanisms, organisational practices and labour market institutions can promote rewarding and meaningful work, the Call for Papers for the 24th edition of the Marco Biagi Conference encourages submissions of both conceptual and empirical papers across a wide range of disciplines (such as labour law, organisation studies, economics and sociology) and methodologies, addressing one or more of the following main topics/tracks:

- **Track 1 - The evolving architecture of remuneration;**
- **Track 2 - Minimum wage regulation and wage-setting institutions;**
- **Track 3 - Pay equity, transparency and technological change;**
- **Track 4 - Remuneration within the broader framework of job quality.**

Track 1 - The evolving architecture of remuneration.
A first analytical step concerns the definition and scope of remuneration in contemporary employment relations. Rather than coinciding with wages alone, remuneration increasingly takes the form of a composite architecture of compensation, including fixed pay, variable rewards (e.g. bonuses and performance-related pay), productivity premiums, profit-sharing schemes and welfare benefits.
This evolving structure raises important questions regarding the quality of work and its remuneration, also in relation to workers' long-term protection, as the composition of earnings may affect contributory pension entitlements and social security coverage. From an organisational perspective, recent studies frame compensation within broader total reward systems, combining financial and non-financial elements. Such architectures can shape worker motivation, engagement and well-being among other employee-related outcomes.
From a political economy perspective, the growing role of variable pay and financial participation may redistribute risks and returns between companies and workers, with implications also at the level of industrial relations in cases where remuneration policies provide for employee involvement in the determination or management of financial participation schemes, but at the same time, due to the unequal distribution within firms and groups of workers of access to variable part of the pay, it can also produce new inequalities and results in an increase in employees' fragmentation.
Tax incentives and institutional frameworks might shape firms' compensation strategies. In this context, public policy instruments, such as public procurement mechanisms that promote decent work by rewarding quality employment, may encourage firms to adopt compensation structures that align with broader social and labour market objectives.

Areas of research that could be explored from this perspective include, but are not limited to:

- the relationship between remuneration and workers' dignity, including debates on fair pay, living wages and the theoretical foundations of wage-setting;
- the role of public policies and fiscal incentives in shaping firms' compensation practices, including the use of public procurement mechanisms to promote decent work;
- the remuneration of non-standard, atypical and self-employed forms of work, including platform work and other hybrid employment arrangements;

- the distributional implications of variable pay schemes, including their effects on wage inequality within and between firms with special regards to different groups of workers;
- the relationship between remuneration structures and labour market segmentation;
- employee financial participation and performance-related remuneration as organisational tools for rewarding productivity and enhancing worker engagement;
- the role of tax policy in shaping the diffusion of performance-related pay, profit-sharing and employee financial participation;
- the treatment of on-call hours, stand-by time and time porosity, particularly in work arrangements characterised by intermittent activity, on-demand work or fragmented working time.

Track 2 - Minimum wage regulation and wage-setting institutions.

A second line of inquiry concerns the role of minimum wage regulation and wage-setting institutions in shaping the quality of work and its remuneration. Minimum wage standards may be established through different mechanisms, such as national legislation and national collective agreements. In this area, a significant impact is registered by international and supranational regulatory sources, such as the ILO Convention C131 and the Directive (EU) 2022/2041 on Adequate Minimum Wages. The interaction between these mechanisms raises important questions about pay governance. For example, stronger collective bargaining coverage and higher levels of trade union representation may help protect wage structures and prevent downward pressure on remuneration. On the other hand, a broad collective bargaining coverage may not always be a guarantee of adequate wages. It is precisely on the wage-setting role of collective bargaining that the Court of Justice ruled in its judgment of 11 November 2025 (Case C-19/23), addressing the delicate interplay between statutory law and the negotiation autonomy of the social partners.

At the organisational level, the introduction of minimum wage standards may lead firms to adjust internal wage structures, revise job classification and job evaluation systems, and reconsider the balance between fixed and variable pay. These adjustments may result in wage compression and the reconfiguration of internal pay hierarchies, as well as broader changes in organisational strategies related to productivity, technology adoption, and performance management.

From a political economy perspective, comparative evidence from countries that have adopted different minimum wage policies may provide important insights into their broader socio-economic effects. In particular, research may explore the impact of minimum wage regulation on dimensions such as labour market participation with special reference to the groups of workers whose reservation wage is closer to minimum wages, absolute and relative poverty, consumption patterns, wage distribution, and labour costs. These analyses may also shed light on how different institutional configurations of wage-setting influence the relationship between remuneration policies, labour market outcomes and overall economic performance.

Possible avenues of research within this perspective include, but are not limited to:

- the distribution of regulatory competences in wage-setting;
- the implications of different institutional configurations of wage-setting across countries for wage dynamics, labour market outcomes and social protection;
- the relationship between minimum wage regulation and productivity strategies, technology adoption and work organization;

- the role of minimum wage regulation in reducing in-work poverty and income inequalities across different groups of workers;
- the potential interactions between minimum wage policies and the expansion of non-standard forms of work, including self-employment, platform work and other hybrid employment arrangements.

Track 3 - Pay equity, transparency and technological change.

A related, yet distinct, line of inquiry concerns pay equity, transparency and the fair determination of remuneration. To ensure equitable wage structures, transparent systems are required for the classification and evaluation of work and competencies, such as job evaluation frameworks and performance management systems that enable fair evaluations within contractual wage scales.

At the same time, technological change, including the growing use of Artificial Intelligence and algorithmic management practices, may increasingly influence how performance is defined, monitored and rewarded. The use of algorithmic management tools to set pay levels could give rise not only to opacity and discriminatory biases, but also to broader systemic issues. For instance, the widespread use of AI tools by workers could gradually redefine performance benchmarks, as the (expected) increase in productivity enabled by technology runs the risk of being incorporated into evaluation criteria and performance targets. This dynamic may generate a self-reinforcing cycle, in which workers are implicitly required to rely on AI tools to meet rising standards of productivity and availability, reflecting broader transformations in post-Fordist work organization.

Such developments raise important questions regarding fairness, responsibility and control. For instance, if workers rely on AI tools to meet performance targets, how should responsibility be allocated when errors occur or the AI-generated outputs prove unreliable? To what extent is the use of AI tools monitored by employers and how is the notion of judgement operationalised when decisions are delegated to statistical models? Finally, how does this affect the distribution of risks and accountability in performance-based remuneration systems? More broadly, these dynamics invite reflection on the implications of AI-mediated work for the governance of performance evaluation, the determination of pay, and the protection of workers in increasingly technologically dense workplaces.

Another line of research is related more directly to pay transparency, gender pay gap reporting and gender pay gap. Gender pay gap is a global issue, particularly pronounced in the Global South, where, according to ILO reports, it constitutes a core element of a broader "jobs gap" that disproportionately affects women. Some countries have put into place specific instruments to address the issue. At the EU level, the question is what are the determinants of the difficulties by Member States in the transposition of the Pay Transparency Directive (Directive (EU) 2023/970) and to what extent different types of pay gap reporting adopted can affect the observed gender wage gap.

Possible avenues of research within this perspective include, but are not limited to:

- the interaction between pay transparency policies, equal pay regulation and organisational pay-setting practices;
- the labour market effects of pay transparency legislation on wage inequality and gender wage gaps;
- the transformation of skills and competencies in technology-mediated workplaces, including how the use of AI tools reshapes required skill sets, task allocation and performance expectations;
- questions of responsibility and risk allocation when workers rely on AI-generated outputs in meeting performance-based remuneration targets;

- the role of social partners in promoting and regulating fair remuneration and equal pay.

Track 4 - Remuneration within the broader framework of job quality.

The above issues should be situated within the wider framework of job quality, which, as noted in the introduction, is a multi-dimensional concept related to the combination of job and employment characteristics that affect workers' health, well-being, and prospects.

In this perspective, wages represent only one of the several dimensions of remuneration, including working time quality, employee-friendly flexibility, work intensity, skills and discretion, social environment and career prospects. Against this backdrop, the role of company and occupational welfare emerges as a key element, integrating non-financial components of remuneration (e.g., benefits and services) alongside organizational arrangements.

In particular, welfare policies can lead the company, in partnership with employees' representatives, to pursue higher employee well-being and retention, also as a return for reaching corporate performance quality objectives.

Possible avenues of research within this perspective include, but are not limited to:

- measurement methodologies of the different dimensions of quality of works and their interaction;
- workers' health and safety, including how working conditions and occupational risks affect well-being and sustainable employment;
- the role of job security in shaping workers' job quality and long-term labour market prospects;
- access to training and opportunities for skills development, particularly in the context of twin transitions;
- the effects of job quality on labour supply decisions, including labour force participation and working hours;
- the effects of poor job quality on career trajectories, wage growth and human capital accumulation;
- the effect of job quality components, such as earnings, working time quality, work intensity or autonomy, in shaping employee-related outcomes;
- the impact of subcontracting and fragmented organisational structures on job quality, wage-setting mechanisms and employment conditions;
- the role of work–life balance and the reconciliation of working and personal time as a key dimension of job quality in contemporary labour markets;
- the role of company welfare schemes to bring together remuneration policies, job quality and workers' well-being.

SUBMISSIONS

1) **Papers**. Scholars who intend to contribute to one of the Conference tracks should submit by 30 September 2026 by filling in the form at the following link (https://fmb.unimore.it/submission-form-call-for-papers-panels/) with:

• the title of the proposed paper;

• an extended abstract **of about 2000 words** (not including references), specifying the topic and the nature of the paper (*e.g.,* theoretical analysis, discussion paper, presentation of empirical data);

• the disciplinary (or inter-disciplinary) domain of the paper (e.g., Labour Law, Organisation Theory, Labour Economics, Sociology, Industrial Relations);
• the author(s)' affiliation(s);
• an indication of the Conference track for which the paper is intended, bearing in mind that the Scientific Committee reserves the prerogative to assign papers to the track and session it deems to be most appropriate.

2) **Panels/Round Tables/Book presentations**. The organisers welcome the submission of proposals for full panel sessions (including round tables, book presentations or other innovative panel formats) addressing topics described in this Call. Panels should consist of four presentations or three paper presentations and one discussant. The panel convenor may also serve as the chairperson of the panel. Proposals should be submitted by the panel convenor by 30 September 2026 by filling in the form at the following link (https://fmb.unimore.it/submission-form-call-for-papers-panels/) and should indicate, in one single document:
• the title of the proposed panel and papers;
• the names of the speakers/discussant/chairperson;
• a brief outline of the objective and the rationale of the panel (about 500 words);
• an abstract of each paper (about 2000 words not including the bibliography).
Paper and panel, round tables, book presentation proposals will be selected by the Scientific Committee by 23 October 2026.

Selected authors (including panel proposals) will be required to submit a paper of 8000 - 10000 words no later than 21 February 2027. The papers should take the form of a research article rather than simply the description of a work in progress.
The Scientific Committee reserves the right to reject papers and panel proposals that are not consistent with the conference tracks or papers that are not consistent with the abstract previously approved.
As a condition of participation in the conference, the proposed work must remain unpublished (i.e., not at any stage of submission or review for any journal or book) before the closing of the conference.
Primary publication opportunities will be provided to authors of papers timely submitted and selected by the Scientific Committee of the Conference, subject to the internal peer review policies of each journal.
The working language of the conference sessions is English, and interpretation services will not be available. Abstracts and papers should be submitted in English.

DEADLINES

- Deadline for submission of expressions of interest and abstracts (papers and panels): 30 September 2026
- Notification of acceptance: 23 October 2026
- Deadline for submission of full papers (papers and panels): 21 February 2027

PARTICIPATION FEES

The participation fee is €50, including the Gala Dinner on March 18th 2027. Please note that dinner attendance will be guaranteed only for participants who register by the deadline, which will be communicated by email together with the selection confirmation.

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CONTACTS

Requests for further information, as well as the submission of full papers, should be addressed to: marcobiagiconference@unimore.it

The first draft of the conference programme will be distributed by the end of January 2027.

Further information will be posted on the Marco Biagi Foundation website: www.fmb.unimore.it

This call for papers has been elaborated by the Local Scientific Committee with the support of: Dr. Roberta Barbieri (University of Modena and Reggio Emilia, Marco Biagi Foundation), Dr. Carlotta Barra (University of Modena and Reggio Emilia), Dr. Francesca Nannetti (Marco Biagi Foundation), Dr. Francesca Nepoti (University of Modena and Reggio Emilia), Dr. Federica Palmirotta (Marco Biagi Foundation), Dr. Ilaria Purificato (University of Modena and Reggio Emilia), Dr. Olga Rymkevich (Marco Biagi Foundation).