

Curricular Unit

Master in L&M 6E 2026/2027

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Introduction

The growing internationalisation of labour relations, the transnational mobility of workers, European integration and the relationship between labour law and international trade call for a legal approach that goes beyond the confines of strictly national labour law.

International Labour Law is structured around the organisations, standards and scope of action of the International Labour Organisation, the United Nations, the Council of Europe and the European Union. There is also an element of private international law that deals with the question of the law applicable to international employment contracts.

This course aims to provide a systematic and integrated understanding of the international and European instruments applicable to labour relations, as well as the mechanisms for resolving legal disputes arising from individual and collective transnational labour situations.

Goals

Acquire knowledge about Employment and Labour Law from an international

Know the main international legal framework (e.g. ILO, European Union).

Develop the ability to solve concrete cases, according to a legal-practical perspective.

Stimulate the ability to debate issues by developing argumentation techniques.

Methods

The course follows a legal-practical perspective and a case-method approach.

Classes are based on the resolution of practical cases and work-group presentations.

Students are invited to participate, work at group, and to present papers based on specific cases and court decisions from different geographies.

Ultimately, the Students will have to do a final work, based on a case about different employment and labour law issues, that students must solve.

The presentation of cases and the attendance of classes are highly recommended.

The development and densification of subjects are flexible, and the Professor is aimed at meeting the interests of students regarding all the points of the syllabus.

Course Contents

Week 1

Monday

I — Introduction to International Labour Law

1. **History and sources of international labour law**
 1. International Labour Law
 2. Sources of International Labour Law
 3. Universal and regional standards
 4. Human rights and fundamental rights in the field of employment
2. **The United Nations and Labour Rights**
 - 2.1. Universal Declaration of Human Rights
 - 2.2. The 1966 International Covenants
 - 2.3. Labour rights as fundamental rights
3. **Council of Europe**
 1. European Convention on Human Rights
 2. European Social Charter

Tuesday

4. **International Labour Organisation**
5. **International Labour Law and International Trade**
 1. The Social Clause
 2. Social clauses in trade agreements
 3. Corporate due diligence
 4. Soft law and social responsibility

Wednesday

6. **European Union Law – Social Dimension**
 1. International Law and European Union Law
 2. The development of European social policy
 3. European Union Social Law and European Union Labour Law
 4. Treaties and the Charter of Fundamental Rights
 5. EU legislative instruments
 6. Court of Justice of the European Union

Thursday

II — Application of international labour law

7. **International Jurisdiction**
 1. Brussels I Regulation

2. Workers' Forum
3. Jurisdiction agreements
8. **Law Applicable to the Employment Contract**
 1. Rome I Regulation
 2. Connection criteria
 3. Limits on private autonomy
 4. Conflicts of law
9. **Multinational Companies and Transnational Regulation**
 1. International framework agreements
 2. Global labour governance
 3. Corporate social responsibility

Friday

III — Contents of International Labour Law

10. The ILO Conventions

11. European Union action in the social and labour fields

1. Free Movement of Workers
2. The concept of worker and employer in the EU
3. Posting of Workers

Week 2

Monday

12. Working Conditions under EU Law

1. **Working hours**
 1. Working hours and the organisation of working hours
 2. Non-working time I: breaks and rest periods
 3. Time off work II: absences and holidays
 4. Right to disconnect

Tuesday

2. **Non-standard work**
 1. Working on platforms
 2. Fixed-term employment and temporary work
 3. Teleworking, remote working, hybrid working and digital nomads
 4. Part-time work and intermittent work

Wednesday

3. **The right to equality and the prohibition of discrimination**
 1. The right to equality between men and women
 2. Motherhood, fatherhood and work-life balance
 3. Equal Pay and Pay Transparency

Thursday

4. **Rights and duties**
 1. Transparent and predictable working conditions
 2. Protection of whistleblowers
 3. Privacy and the protection of personal data
 4. Health and safety at work

Friday

13. European Social Dialogue

1. Social partners
2. European Works Councils
3. European framework agreements
4. European collective bargaining

Normative Sources

1. Conventions of the International Labour Organisation
2. European Social Charter
3. European Convention on Human Rights
4. Treaties of the European Union
5. Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union
6. The Brussels I bis and Rome I Regulations

Assessment

Students will be graded based on:

- a) A written exam – 24 hours take-home exam (50%)
- b) Their participation in class, group presentations and written assignments (50%)

References

Main bibliographic references

Barnard, Catherine - EU Employment Law, 6th edition ed, Oxford, 2022.

Davidov, Guy/ Langille, Brian The Idea of Labour Law, Oxford, 2011.

Davidov, Guy - A Purposive Approach to Labour Law, Oxford University Press 2016.

Dray, Guilherme, An Introduction to Portuguese Employment and Labour Law, 3rd Ed., Almedina, Coimbra, 2023

Servais, Jean-Michel - International Labour Law, 8th Edition ed, The Hague, 2024.

Weiss, Manfred – Introduction to European Labour Law, Handbook of Labour Law, 2016, Vol. II, pp. 53–84.

Note: Additional elements will be indicated during the lessons.

READINGS

- [The Idea of Labour Law](#), Guy Davidov & Brian Langille – Background; Notion and importance of Labour Law
- [ILO – Collective Bargaining](#), ILO – Sources and importance of collective bargaining
- [ILO – Employment Relationship Recommendation n 198](#), ILO – Employment contract and its qualification
- [ILO – Employment Contracts Act](#) – ILO, Employment contract; content
- [California Employment Contract Template](#) – ILO, Employment contract; content
- [Employees’ Personality Rights](#), ACM.Gov – Citizenship Rights
- [GDPR & Protection of Personal Data](#), GDPR Summary – Citizenship Right
- [ILO Labour Standards on Equality at Work](#) – Citizenship Rights
- [Corporate Social Responsibility & Labor Compliance](#), Guilherme Dray - CSR
- [Termination of Employment Contract, ILO C158](#), ILO – Termination of the Employment Contract
- [ILO Principles Concerning The Right to Strike](#), ILO – Right to Strike
- [“Objective” vs “Subjective” Job Insecurity: Consequences of Temporary Work for Job Satisfaction and Organizational Commitment in four European Countries](#), Hans De Witte, Katharina Näswall
- [Collective Bargaining Laws: Purpose and Scope](#), Guy Davidov

LEGISLATION

- [ILO Constitution](#) (1919)
- [ILO Declaration of Philadelphia](#) (1944)
- [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#) (1948)
- [European Union Charter of Fundamental Rights](#) (2000)
- [European Pillar of Social Rights](#) (2021)
- [Portuguese Constitution \(1976\)](#)
- [Portuguese Labour Code](#) (2009)