

## **Promoting diversity and ensuring equality at work: the role of the state**

### **Stream Organisers:**

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### **Stream outline:**

A long standing debate in the enhancement of equality and the promotion of greater respect for diversity in the workplace, is the role of external regulatory compulsion, either at the domestic (state intervention) level or at the supranational level (for instance the European Union) At present there is international variety in the approaches taken to promoting equality and diversity at work. This variety stems from a range of sources. Among these are approaches associated with 'the new institutionalism' - which may explain some differences in relation to gender equality regulation - and national-level socio-demographic/political factors, which may better explain differences in relation to race equality regulation. In all of these, 'politics' play a role and no regulatory system for promoting equality and diversity would have existed without the collective mobilisation of group interests; whether it be on the issue of gender, race, disability or sexuality. While such visible interests contribute to shape the regulatory framework in any society and at any one point in time, the mobilisation of less visible interests such as business organisations also play a crucial role. Support or opposition from business is based on economic and political/ideological considerations. Primarily these considerations are economic (opposition on the grounds of the costs; or support on the grounds of 'levelling the playing field'). However, support or opposition can also be ideological: a resistance to the managerial prerogative or support for philanthropic reasons. Currently the financial crisis and accompanying recession are likely to shape these dynamics further.

### **Possible Themes:**

- What is the impact of state policies on equality and diversity in different national contexts?
- How is the financial crisis affecting national policy debates on equality and diversity at work such as work-life balance and age diversity?
- How are national cultural/political circumstances affecting trends in the state regulation of equality and diversity at work?
- How are demographic factors affecting trends in the state regulation of workplace equality and diversity (changing age profiles, female participation, migration patterns)?
- What is the role of government in leading change for equality, diversity and inclusion at work?

**Publication plans:** A special issue of the journal, *International Journal of Human Resource Management* will be proposed.