



# Exchange programme Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam

Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam - Exchange programme Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam - 2024-2025

## Exchange

Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam offers many English-taught courses in a variety of subjects, ranging from arts & culture and social sciences, neurosciences and computer science, to economics and business administration.

The International Office is responsible for course approval and course registration for exchange students. For details about course registration, requirements, credits, semesters and so on, please [visit the exchange programmes webpages](#).

# International Labour Law: Multinational Corporations in a Globalizing World

Course Code	R_Int.lab.I
Credits	6
Period	P5
Course Level	400
Language Of Tuition	English
Faculty	Faculty of Law
Course Coordinator	prof. dr. K. Boonstra
Examiner	prof. dr. K. Boonstra
Teaching Staff	prof. dr. K. Boonstra
Teaching method(s)	Lecture

## Course Objective

The objective for this course is to provide a thorough understanding of international labour law through an innovative and challenging method. The course focusses on how international labour law (potentially) deals with the current questions that rise in the context of increased globalization of trade and production.

Upon completion of the course, the students will:

- have a thorough knowledge of the regulation of work and the role the International Labour Organization (ILO) and other international and regional organizations play in regulating work in an international context (e.g. UN Global Compact, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and Council of Europe)
- understand the institutional and legislative framework relating to the ILO and the other international organizations involved in the protection of social rights;
- have a thorough understanding and knowledge of the ILO's tripartite structure, which seeks after an equal voice for workers, employers and governments;
- have insight in the obligations of ILO member states and the effectiveness of the ILO supervisory machinery;
- be able to identify and apply soft-law regulatory mechanisms in this field, such as OECD guidelines for multinational companies, the UN Global Compact and various instruments of Corporate Social Responsibility codes
- have insight in diverse alternative – predominantly private – ways of regulation, e.g. with the aim of the promotion labour law obligation and rights and safeguarding them in the transnational setting in which multinationals operate.
- have insight into the development of civil law litigation that is increasingly having impact on the risk management of multinational corporations;
- be able to analyse labour law and decent work issues in the context of different national legal systems from the perspective of international labour law;
- be able to build up a case concerning a supply chain in a multinational company, in which both international public law and other legal doctrines are applied with the aim to remedy violations of fundamental labour rights and if possible compensate the victims/aggrieved parties;
- be able to apply all the different international public legal instruments as well as alternative private legal instruments on specific cases, in order to be able to create an effective remedy for human rights violations in a supply-chain.

## Course Content

Context and background:

The impact of globalization of trade on labour law and the protection of workers' rights is potentially vast. In order to present themselves as suitable places of establishment or production of goods and services, countries are tempted to compete on the price of labour.

Labour law that covers all workers in the supply chain does not exist and the regular known methods of legislating are insufficient to deal with this issue. During this course this problem will be reviewed and developments in this area studied.

Through a general introduction in international labour law students will be made familiar with the institutional framework of the International Labour Organization and the legal nature of international labour law (from both an international and regional perspective), and various legislative techniques, material aspects and the impact of international labour law on the domestic legal order of the member states.

Recent developments in international labour law concerning the application of private law doctrines such as those on liability and tort, on violations of human rights in the supply-chain of multinational corporations will be studied, and students will work on effective cures and remedies including compensation. The aim of this course is that the students will learn to work with the different legal tools that have been developed over the years, in order to find solutions for the problems in the application of labour law in a world where trade has been globalized, but social justice has not.

Through the course several topics are discussed:

- the institutional framework within which international labour law has come into existence;
- the legal nature of international labour law and the functioning of the ILO and its supervisory mechanisms;
- the main principles of international labour law and core labour standards concerning collective bargaining rights, prohibition of forced and child labour, and discrimination in respect of employment and working conditions;
- methods to apply international labour law in the supply-chain of multinational corporations;
- case-law (e.g. Walmart, Adidas, Coca cola) concerning the application of international labour law;
- alternative regulation and dispute settlement, corporate codes and international collective bargaining;
- international trade agreements and labour clauses;
- the impact of international labour law on the national legal order.

## Additional Information Teaching Methods

A weekly meeting of 2 hours. Every meeting will start with a short introduction by the lecturer. After this the whole group will work on the subject of that particular week. Throughout the whole course students will work on an individual assignment. In this assignment an actual case concerning workers' rights violations in a supply-chain of a multinational company is analysed and presented. By choice, students can hand this in in Dutch. During the course an active involvement and participation of all students is required. Students will accumulate the literature and other materials to enable them to find a legal solution for their cases. Of course also the literature and materials presented on the intranet (Canvas) will be very useful.

## Method of Assessment

Individual paper (in English or Dutch, by choice) and mandatory attendance. There is no written exam apart from the individual paper that is based on the assignment which will be discussed in class, step by step.

## Literature

To be announced on the intranet (Canvas).

### Additional Information Target Audience

Apart from regular students, this course is also available for:

Students from other universities and faculties;  
Exchange students and Erasmus students;  
Contract students.

Courses from a master at the faculty can only be taken as a secondary course if you have a diploma that gives access to the relevant master/ specialization and if you are enrolled in a master.

### Recommended background knowledge

A basic knowledge of Labour/Employment Law is preferable.