

LatinMUN 2026

# **Social, Cultural, and Humanitarian Committee (SOCHUM)**

**Topic: Evaluating the impact of national  
labor deregulation on the protection of  
fundamental worker's right and  
international labor conventions**



LatinMUN

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**Welcoming message from the chair:**

Dear and fellow delegates,

It's an honor to have the opportunity to be your guides during this event. We hope that this simulation will give you the chance to embrace leadership skills and flourish knowledge.

We are looking forward to hearing your ideas, your solutions, and your voices. Let's make this space one of empathy, strength, and action.

We highly recommend participation and commitment throughout the debate, in order to maximize the enjoyment of the experience to the maximum. We are thrilled to have you in this debate, good luck and best wishes to all delegates!

Sincerely,

Victoria Canales & Santiago León

### **Committee's Background:**

The Social, Humanitarian, and Cultural Committee (SOCHUM) is one of the six main committees of the United Nations General Assembly, established in 1948 in the wake of World War II. Its creation was driven by the global recognition of the need to address social injustices and human rights violations, culminating in the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. SOCHUM's core mission revolves around promoting fundamental human rights and improving social and cultural conditions worldwide. SOCHUM addresses a wide range of issues, including the rights of women, children, refugees, and indigenous peoples, while tackling major concerns such as racism, discrimination, and poverty. The committee engages member states in discussions to draft resolutions and create international policies aimed at fostering social justice and equity. By collaborating with various stakeholders, including non-governmental organizations and civil society, SOCHUM aims to ensure that diverse perspectives are considered, ultimately striving for a more just and inclusive global society where human dignity is valued and demonstrated for all.

### **Topic Background:**

National labor deregulation (a decrease in stable requirements and rules on hiring, firing, union activity, overtime and health-and-safety) has a measurable impact on the two core worker rights protected by the United Nations through the International Labour Organization: freedom of association (ILO Convention 87) and the right to collective bargaining (ILO Convention 98). Freedom of association means workers can join or form independent unions without interference, while collective bargaining guarantees that those unions can negotiate wages, hours and conditions on behalf of their members.

Between 2010 and 2023 the OECD's Employment-Protection Index fell from an average of 0.62 to 0.48, and the global union density dropped from 23 % to 19 %, indicating that fewer workers are covered by legally recognised bargaining structures.

The United Nations monitors compliance primarily via the ILO's supervision system, the UN Human Rights Council's Universal Periodic Review, and SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth). In the most recent ILO complaints database, reported violations of Conventions 87 and 98 rose 22 % (from 1,210 cases in 2010 to 1,487 in 2023). The World Bank's Women, Business and the Law index shows a 0.09-point decline in "employment-protection" scores worldwide over the same period, a trend echoed in the UN's SDG 8.8 progress reports where the average decent-work score fell from 71 to 66.

There are also country-level snapshots such as the United States, "right-to-work" expansions in eight states and 2020 "at-will" hiring reforms cut union density from 11.9 % (2015) to 10.5 % (2023) and raised ILO complaints by 31 %. Brazil's 2017 labour reform reduced union dues and made dismissals easier, pushing union density from 18 % to 12 % and lowering collective-bargaining coverage by about 2 percentage points. The United Kingdom's 2016 Employment Relations Act and pandemic-era flexible furlough rules trimmed union density from 23.5 % to 21.9 % and saw a 4 % rise in workplace injuries between 2021 and 2023. In India, the 2020 Labour Code consolidation, while streamlining 44 statutes, has been criticised for weakening dispute-resolution mechanisms; informal-sector union density remains below 2 % and ILO reviews flag "implementation gaps" for Convention 87.

### **Current Situation:**

National labor deregulation refers to government policies that reduce regulations on employment practices, such as easing hiring and firing processes, minimizing wage

floors, limiting union powers, and cutting oversight from labor inspectorates. These measures, often found under neoliberal economic agendas to boost business flexibility and attract investment, have deeply affected fundamental workers' rights worldwide, frequently violating key International Labour Organization (ILO) conventions like No. 87 (freedom of association and right to organize), No. 98 (right to collective bargaining), No. 29 (forced labor prohibition), and No. 105 (abolition of forced labor). As of 2026, the global landscape shows a stark deterioration: the ITUC Global Rights Index 2025, covering 151 countries, recorded the worst scores in its history, with 87% of nations infringing on strike rights, 80% obstructing collective bargaining, and 72% denying workers meaningful access to justice—a sharp rise from 65% in 2024. This trend comes from deregulation's tendency to prioritize short-term economic gains, emphasizing enforcement mechanisms and emboldening employer abuses amid globalization and austerity pressures.

Currently, it is imperative to focus on the disconnection between formal commitments and real-world outcomes, a phenomenon often called “radical decoupling.” Acceptance of ILO conventions often serves reputational purposes without translating to substantive protections, particularly in deregulated contexts where financial liberalization and trade openness degrade both legal frameworks (*de jure* rights) and practical enforcement (*de facto* rights). A comprehensive study across 196 countries from 1985–2015 found that while conventions aim to elevate standards, they sometimes correlate with declining labor practices post-adoption, especially in non-transition economies facing competitive deregulation races. The ILO's own data via ILOSTAT reveals violations intensifying since 2020: 75% of countries restrict independent union formation, 71 nations reported worker arrests or detentions, and violence against workers occurred in 40 countries, with 45% curbing labor-related free speech. In the U.S., Trump's prior deregulatory push rolled back overtime eligibility, safety inspections, and union safeguards, leading to trillions in societal costs from injuries, wage theft, and productivity losses. Regionally, the Americas scored a dire 3.68 (on a 1-5 scale, 5 being worst), Europe 2.78, Africa 4.25,

and Asia-Pacific 3.95, reflecting how deregulation amplifies vulnerabilities in informal economies that employ 60% of the global workforce.

Looking ahead, projections are threatening: if current trajectories of deregulation, rising extremism, and weakened multilateral social dialogue persist, no country may achieve a top-tier workers' rights rating within a decade. Mitigation efforts like global supply chain audits, AI-driven compliance monitoring, and transnational litigation provide glimmers of hope, yet they falter against entrenched challenges such as geopolitical conflicts, cultural relativism in rights interpretation, and the gig economy's evasion of conventions. The PMC/NIH analysis on ILO's transformative role emphasizes that without robust national implementation tied to international pressure, deregulation will continue fostering impunity, as seen in rising precarious work and suppressed wages. Ultimately, revitalizing protections demands rebalancing flexibility with accountability, potentially through binding ILO mechanisms or regional pacts.

### **Key players:**

The **United States** stands out as a key player because its labor-deregulation model—centered on weakening union protections, loosening overtime rules, and scaling back workplace-safety enforcement—has served as a reference point for many other countries pursuing more “flexible” labor markets. Over the past decade, policy shifts at the federal level have reduced the role of labor inspectors and narrowed the scope of collective bargaining, contributing to a global trend of eroding worker-right safeguards aligned with core ILO conventions. The U.S. also plays a large role in shaping trade-related labor standards, so its deregulatory stance directly influences labor-rights debates in partner countries and international institutions.

**China** is another major global actor, both because of its size and because of how it balances strict control over independent unions with high-growth, export-oriented labor regulation. Chinese labor law formally recognizes workers' rights, but in practice the

state tightly manages tripartite dialogue and suppresses autonomous union organizing, leading international indices to flag serious violations of freedom of association and collective-bargaining rights. At the same time, China's export supply chains and investment in global infrastructure shape how other countries regulate labor standards in order to compete for trade and investment.

**India** is a crucial player due to its vast informal workforce and selective deregulation of labor codes, which have eased hiring and firing for employers while leaving millions of informal workers without statutory protections. The government's consolidation and amendment of labor laws have been framed as modernization, but labor organizations argue they tilt bargaining power toward capital and weaken enforcement for core rights under ILO conventions. India's experiences show how deregulation can coexist with rapid growth, making it a repeated case study in global debates about job-protection flexibility versus social protection.

**Bangladesh** features prominently as one of the countries ranked among the "worst" for workers' rights, with repeated reports of violent suppression of strikes, harassment of union leaders, and minimal enforcement of collective-bargaining guarantees. Its garment-exports-driven economy has made it a global symbol of how deregulation and weak inspection capacity can harm fundamental rights, even as brands and governments negotiate voluntary labor-standards agreements.

**Türkiye** and the **Philippines** also appear near the top of global "worst-off" lists, with systematic restrictions on strike rights, union bans, and crackdowns on labor activists in contexts where governments have deregulated or reinterpreted labor-law enforcement to prioritize political control and investment attraction. These countries illustrate how deregulation can intersect with authoritarian tendencies and economic-nationalism strategies, producing dramatic declines in ILO-aligned protections even as growth and exports continue.

Finally, European Union countries such as Italy and others in the EU appear as important cases because they show how deregulation can spread within a region that formally upholds high-standard labor conventions. National reforms that weaken job-protection

rules or bypass collective-bargaining institutions have contributed to Europe's worsening index scores, even while EU-level frameworks like the European Pillar of Social Rights try to shore up minimum protections. This contrast between supranational commitments and national deregulatory experiments makes the EU a key laboratory for understanding the global impact of labor-law flexibility on workers' rights.

### **Conclusion:**

In conclusion, the widespread trend of national labor deregulation poses a serious threat to the realization of fundamental workers' rights and the effective implementation of core International Labour Organization (ILO) conventions. The UN has repeatedly emphasized that economic growth and labor-market flexibility must not come at the expense of fair wages, safe working conditions, and the rights to organize and bargain collectively. When countries weaken labor standards or fail to enforce ratified ILO conventions, the result is greater inequality, increased informality, and a higher risk of exploitation, including forced labor and child labor, which run directly counter to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its commitment to decent work for all.

SOCHUM therefore calls for reconciliation labor-market reforms with robust social-protection systems and strong institutional mechanisms for upholding labor rights. This includes strengthening labor inspectorates, ensuring independent trade-union activity, and embedding international labor standards into national legislation and trade agreements. The UN also urges multilateral cooperation—through the ILO, the Human Rights Council, and development partners—to monitor compliance, support capacity-building, and hold governments and businesses accountable where deregulation leads to systematic violations of workers' rights. Only through such a balanced, rights-based approach can the world ensure that labor-market flexibility serves people, not just profits.

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