



## **Call for Papers**

*International Conference*

### **Contested Equality**

### **International and Comparative Legal Perspectives**

Equality and non-discrimination are central features of the contemporary national and international architecture of legal systems and a core element in various areas of law. Constitutional orders and international law require equal treatment of human beings as a standard that must apply throughout the legal system, both in legislation and in the application of the law by public authorities and—at least to some extent—to actions by private actors. At the same time, the concept of legal equality faces profound challenges in theory and practice and is deeply contested in legal scholarship. While inequalities in wealth and opportunity are steadily increasing, exacerbating the gap between rich and poor within and across countries, the question of “equality of what – wealth, opportunity, resources, capabilities, or something else?” is still debated. Likewise, criticism is directed towards the outdated concept of “formal” equality, which might result in the exclusion of vulnerable people, such as women, people of colour, ethnic minorities, or people of the LGBTQIA+ community.

New challenges, such as socio-economic transformation, digitization, migration, climate change and the pandemic, further aggravate the uncertainties surrounding the concept of legal equality. For example, the rapid and uncomplicated reception of refugees from Ukraine in Europe, which stands in contrast to the refugee policy of the European Union of the last decade, raises questions about the equality of refugees. Unequal welfare and taxation systems increasingly result in appalling socio-economic inequalities as well as in the maintenance of deeply gendered roles within and across societies. Similarly, tax avoidance by powerful multinational corporations continues to contribute to the loss of public revenues and thus to a rise in inequality. Moreover, the current Covid-19 pandemic is a reminder of how poor and disadvantaged populations are affected by growing inequalities. For instance, children dependent on school meals have found themselves short of food due to the pandemic.

In the political sphere, the current geopolitical constellations and, in particular, the rise of non-democratic States as well as the erosion of democratic States from within also call for a critical re-examination of the concept of equality in law. In recent years, political parties with an anti-egalitarian agenda have gained considerable influence all around the world. In response, theoretical approaches, such as Third World Approaches to International Law, Critical Race Theories or Feminist Theories, have

started to contest the current equality guarantees, drawing attention to a more inclusive and enhanced understanding of the concept of equality in law.

Considering the above and other recent developments and challenges, we invite international law scholars, practitioners, and scholars from other disciplines to discuss and evaluate the current debate on the theoretical, doctrinal, comparative and interdisciplinary aspects of the legal concept of equality and its future shape in public (international) law and related disciplines. The conference is not restricted to a particular area and submissions of topics related to (in-)equality in any of the following area are welcomed, but not limited to:

- Human rights law, including issues of social justice
- Migration law and citizenship rights
- Law of armed conflict
- International economic law, including trade, investment, and tax law
- International environmental law
- Science and new technologies
- Theoretical foundations of equality, notably in legal theories and legal sociology
- Interdisciplinary approaches to equality

## Submission

The deadline for the submission of abstracts is **20 May 2022**. Please send your abstract in English of up to 500 words to [equalitylaw@rwi.uzh.ch](mailto:equalitylaw@rwi.uzh.ch). The following information must be included in the abstract (in a single pdf-document): A short biography (max. 200 words), the author's name and affiliation, and the author's contact details, including email address.

A decision on acceptance of the abstract will be communicated no later than **27 May 2022**. Authors of accepted abstracts will be requested to submit their draft papers (min. 3000 words) by **20 September 2022**. After the conference, there will be the opportunity to publish selected high-quality papers in an edited volume or in a special issue of an international journal. Further details about how to submit papers for publication will be provided to the speakers after the conference.

## Conference

The conference will take place on Thursday, 20 October 2022, and on Friday, 21 October 2022 at the University of Zurich, Switzerland. On Wednesday evening, 19 October 2022, there will be a public keynote speech on the overall topic of the conference.

The conference organizers will cover travel and accommodation expenses for all speakers who wish to attend the Conference in person and who do not have their own institutional funding. The conference will be held in hybrid form. It is the intention of the organizers to host a climate friendly conference. Participants from outside Europe will not be flown in for this reason. All others are kindly asked to travel by train if possible.

## **Timeline**

Deadline for the submission of abstracts:	20 May 2022
Acceptance of abstracts:	27 May 2022
Submission of the draft papers:	20 September 2022
Conference:	20-21 October 2022

## **Organization**

University Research Priority Program (URPP), Equality of Opportunity, Faculty of Law,  
University of Zurich

Dr Elif Askin, Senior Researcher and Lecturer, Faculty of Law, University of Zurich

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