

# CALL FOR ABSTRACTS



MENASP Network 2026 Online Conference

## Social Policy and Social Protection in the Middle East and North Africa:

Innovation, Adaptation or Business as Usual?

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25 - 26 November 2026 | Online

Hosted by the University of Birmingham, in partnership with the ILO STREAM Programme

### Conference

The MENASP Network invites submissions for its 2026 conference on **Social Policy and Social Protection in the Middle East and North Africa: Innovation, Adaptation or Business as Usual?**, building on more than a decade of sustained dialogue on social rights, social protection systems, governance reform and inclusive development in the region.

Since its inaugural 2013 conference, MENASP has consistently engaged with key questions around social protection, poverty and inequality, unemployment and labour market transformation, vulnerable populations and the relationship between welfare systems and broader political and social change. Previous conferences have explored policy learning in the era of social protection (Cairo 2019), the search for a new social contract (Bonn 2016), and the need for resilient, inclusive and environmentally sustainable social policies (Rabat 2023).

Across the MENA region, social policy systems are increasingly shaped by intersecting pressures, including fiscal constraints, conflict and displacement, climate vulnerability, labour migration and demographic shifts, labour market informality and accelerating digital transformation. This conference aims to critically examine whether current trajectories reflect **innovation, adaptation or a business as usual approach** in social protection systems, and what alternative futures may emerge.

We welcome contributions from academics, policymakers, practitioners, civil society actors and early-career researchers.

### Thematic Areas

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We invite submissions addressing, but not limited to:

- Social protection reform and institutional innovation in the MENA region
- Labour markets, informality, precarity and employment transformation
- Poverty, inequality, redistribution and welfare regimes
- Labour migration dynamics and access to social protection
- Social policy in contexts of conflict, fragility and forced displacement
- Climate change, environmental risks and adaptive social protection
- Digitalisation, data systems and the future of welfare delivery
- Financing, governance and sustainability of social protection systems
- State–society relations and emerging social contracts in the MENA region

## Abstract Requirements

Abstracts should be **maximum 500 words** and must clearly and explicitly include the following elements, in line with MENASP Network submission standards:

- **Research focus and objectives:** Clearly state the research question, problem or policy issue addressed
- **Theoretical or analytical framework:** Indicate the conceptual approach or body of literature informing the study
- **Methodology:** Briefly describe the research design, data sources or analytical approach (qualitative, quantitative, mixed-methods, comparative, case study, etc.)
- **Key findings (if applicable):** For completed or advanced work, summarise main empirical or analytical results
- **Policy relevance / contribution:** Explicitly outline the implications for social policy, social protection systems or governance in the MENA region
- **Originality:** Clarify what is novel in the argument, evidence or approach

**Keywords:** Please include 3–5 keywords at the end of the abstract.

## Abstract Submission Guidelines

- **Title:** Abstract titles should be concise (under 100 characters) and clearly reflect the focus of the research
- **Theme Selection:** Indicate the conference theme under which the submission should be considered
- **Author Details:** Provide full names (surname, first name) and institutional affiliations for all authors
- **Language:** Submissions must be in English
- **Format:** Single abstract per submission (no merged papers unless part of a panel proposal)

## Panel Proposal Submission Guidelines

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- **Panel Leader:** One person must submit the full panel proposal on behalf of all presenters. All communications will be directed through the panel leader
- **Panel Composition:** Panels should include **3–4 papers**
- **Title:** Panel titles should be concise (under 100 characters) and clearly reflect the theme
- **Theme Selection:** Indicate the relevant conference theme for the panel
- **Author Details:** Only presenting authors should be listed in the submission form; additional contributors may be included in the uploaded document
- **Abstract Length:** Each paper abstract (and the panel overview) must be 250–300 words.
- **Submission Template:** Panels must be submitted using the official MENASP template as a single consolidated document
- Panels will follow **Korpi's rules**, with discussants assigned to each session

## Special Session

Co-hosted by the ILO STREAM Programme and the MENASP Network

### Between Crises and Reforms: Wage Protection, Social Security, and Labour Migration along South–South Corridors to the GCC

The MENASP Network, in partnership with the [ILO STREAM Programme](#), invites contributions to a thematic session examining the interlinkages between social protection and labour migration along migration corridors to the GCC, especially from South Asia, Africa and other Arab countries.

The session focuses on the multi-layered effects of regional crises on migrant workers' access to wage and social protection mechanisms at origin and at destination.

Most countries in the GCC have recently undertaken systemic reforms to their [wage](#) and [social protection](#) frameworks, but policy developments differ significantly across countries in scope, institutional arrangements and the extent to which they align with International Labour Standards (ILS). Moreover, translating legal and systemic changes into effective protection on the ground remains a gradual and challenging process, especially for the most vulnerable migrant workers. The labour market governance framework inherited from the sponsorship system continues to influence access to rights, benefits and services, including wages and social protection.

Against this backdrop of reforms flux, ongoing regional conflicts raise urgent questions about the resilience and reach of new systems. Once more the crisis is exposing structural labour market issues, including gaps in wage protection frameworks and migrant workers' access to social protection benefits such as employment injury and death compensation, unemployment protection and end-of-service indemnities, and the lack of effective mechanisms for cross-border social security coordination and portability. Measures taken unilaterally by countries of origin, such as through migrant workers welfare fund, can hardly fill the gaps of incomplete systems at destination.

Contributions are invited to treat conflict-driven emerging needs and systems disruptions as a diagnostic lens through which to assess the relevance, fit and performance of social protection and wage protection systems. Papers should examine how these systems respond when placed under strain: whether they hold, adapt, or fail when confronted with shocks – and what this reveals about their design, gaps, and capacity to protect migrant workers in the very particular context of GCC labour markets. Findings that yield actionable policy insights for making existing frameworks more sustainable, resilient and accessible are especially welcome, as are contributions that take a specific migration-corridor perspective, adopt an explicit gender lens, and examine the circumstances of migrant workers in emerging forms of employment, vulnerable sectors (e.g. domestic work, platform work, or de facto self-employment, hospitality sector), or irregular status.

**For the Special Session contributions:** Submission should comprise a proposal of no more than 700 words (excluding references and author details), accompanied by a current CV, and formatted in 12-point font with standard margins.

## How to Submit

All submissions must be made via email to: [info@menasp.com](mailto:info@menasp.com)

Please include the following in your submission email:

- Indicate whether you are submitting an **individual abstract, panel proposal or for the special session**
- Attach your abstract(s) or panel proposal as a **single Word or PDF document**
- Include a clear **email subject line**:
  - “MENASP 2026 Abstract Submission – [Your Name]” or
  - “MENASP 2026 Panel Proposal – [Panel Title]” or
  - “MENASP 2026 Special Session – [Your Name]”
- Ensure all author details and affiliations are included in the document
- Indicate the relevant **conference theme** in your submission

## Important Dates

- **Abstract submission deadline:** 1 July 2026
- **Abstract selection begins (including clarification rounds if needed):** 15 July 2026
- **Notification of acceptance:** 31 August 2026

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**Contact** Email: [info@menasp.com](mailto:info@menasp.com) | Website: [www.menasp.com](http://www.menasp.com)