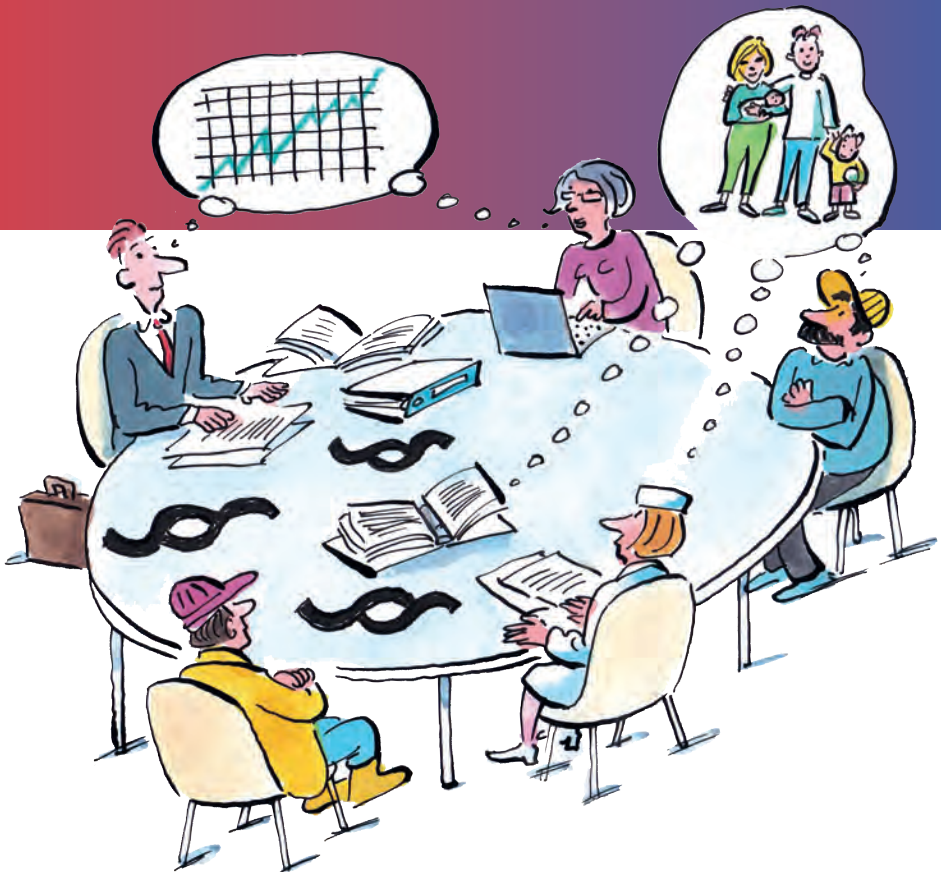


Future of work – changing labour relations





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Foreword

“It is imperative to act with urgency to seize the opportunities and address the challenges to shape a fair, inclusive and secure future of work with full, productive and freely chosen employment and decent work for all.” These words are taken from the “Centenary Declaration” that was adopted by the International Labour Conference in 2019 to mark 100 years since the founding of the International Labour Organization (ILO).

There are two driving forces in particular that are the source of profound shifts: digitalisation and climate change. A third and entirely new phenomenon that did not arise until after the conclusion of the seminars presented in this publication is intensifying these forces: the COVID-19 pandemic.

But it is also true that the future of work has already begun, and workers’ organisations are already in the process of shaping it.

The challenges involved are numerous, diverse and far-reaching. This publication can therefore only address a limited number of aspects:

How is the use of new technologies changing the ways in which we work, organise work, and structure labour relations?

How many jobs, and of what kind, will come into being or disappear in the course of ecological restructuring in Europe?

How do social security systems need to be reorganised, and how should they be financed in the future?

These are only some of the questions about the future of work in response to which regulations must be set on the right course, transitions into work in the years ahead developed, and high-quality jobs achieved for all.

It quickly becomes apparent that many developments require immediate solutions, but that workers' organisations must at the same time be mindful of the complexity involved in this far-reaching change.

However unintentional, there may also be some appeal in reading and reflecting on the descriptions, insights, conclusions and recommendations of this publication in the light of the current COVID-19 pandemic.

With this in mind, I hope it makes for interesting and inspiring reading.

Sigrid Schraml
EZA Secretary-General

1 Introduction

“We are living through a fundamental transformation in the way we work. The future of work asks us to consider the biggest questions of our age.

What influences will technology and business digitalisation have on how and where we work?

How will demand for workforce skills change with the rise of data analytics and intelligent automation?

As work becomes increasingly ‘mobile’ and ‘borderless’, how can organisations ensure continuous workplace innovation and collaboration through smart workplace designs?”¹

The world of work is changing. New technology will take its place in our everyday lives. Robotisation, digitalisation and automation have a huge impact on the labour market, on private life and on our society in general. All three processes are part of the so-called Industry 4.0 and can be explained in brief as follows:

- **Robotisation** – the introduction of robots to carry out industrial tasks
- **Digitalisation** – the process of converting information of any form into a digital format that can be understood by computers

¹ The New Paradigm for Workforce Productivity, Efficiency & Performance. Singapore, 10-11 April 2019, The Future of Work Asia Summit.

- **Automation** – the use of machines and technology to make processes run on their own without human labour

Some megatrends related to these processes can be observed:

- Workers with a lower secondary education will be most affected by automation.
- An estimated 96% of all workers at threat from technology could find similar or better work with adequate training.
- About 50% of current jobs globally could theoretically be automated. For about 60% of occupations, at least 30% of their constituent activities could be automated. Hence, 40% of the workers' time could be freed up for continuous learning and to exercise or develop creativity.
- Automation and “artificial intelligence” (AI) will increase the demand for technological skills over the next 10-15 years, while the need for basic cognitive, physical and manual skills will decline.
- For an additional average of 25% of jobs, 50-70% of tasks are likely to change significantly because of automation.
- There will be 3.5 million unfilled cybersecurity jobs globally in 2021 due to the lack of skilled people in the field. India alone will need up to 1 million cybersecurity professionals by 2020.
- While there are fewer new jobs created directly by technological progress, one additional technology job creates around five new, complementary jobs in the local non-tradable sector.

- The number of industrial robots in Europe has grown by 400% over the past 25 years (from around 95,000 to over 430,000). Over 40% of these are currently in use in Germany.

Information communication technology (ICT) covers a wide range of technologies and significantly influences the workforce and the work environment, the nature of work and the perception of work itself.

2 The impact of technologies

Digitalisation creates significant challenges for economies and businesses because it changes production systems and markets.

It brings with it a need to restructure processes not only in production sectors but also in services such as finance. New business models based on digital technologies are creating fast-changing markets for goods and services.

Digitalisation also creates a threat to employees' working conditions and levels of protection.

At company level, digitalisation reshapes corporate strategy and business models, and changes relations between companies, customers and suppliers. Digitalisation also brings with it a need to find new ways for companies to organise work and manage resources. All companies want to make higher profits and be more efficient, usually via automation or outsourcing.

All these changes in the global market – rapid technological development and competition between countries and companies – announce a need for more flexible relations in the labour market.

As a result, all over Europe and across the world, atypical forms of employment are rapidly growing. Along with standard forms of permanent, full-time employment relationships, new forms of employment are becoming a reality for a large proportion of European workers.

Almost one in five employees in Europe work from home or in public spaces at least several times per month.

There is a lack of official statistics on this, but according to research, the Netherlands is the leading country in the EU-28 for atypical forms of employment. These kinds of employment developed in Western Europe in countries like Germany, Spain and the UK, and are less popular in Eastern Europe in countries like Poland, Latvia, Bulgaria and Lithuania.

But new forms of employment are also growing in Eastern European countries.

3 The development of Industry 4.0 in the European Union

In the Czech Republic, the government plan for the Fourth Industrial Revolution will create opportunities. The population respects developments in the field of digitalisation. The aim of the state is to implement and develop it further.

In Romania, there is huge informal employment. 44% of employees work in part-time employment. There are restrictions on trade unionism. Collective bargaining is limited. Of the 29 sectors of activity, only one is governed by a collective agreement. Education can follow developments in society and society can enter the Fourth Industrial Revolution.

Estonia is already welcoming the Fourth Industrial Revolution. Workers' rights and benefits have regressed by several decades, and the revolution may aggravate the situation.

In Germany in 2015, the federal government launched the Green Paper Work 4.0: Re-imagining Work, paving the way for dialogue with social partners and other stakeholders on the implementation of digital transformation in employment, education, requalification and other relevant topics. It shows the importance of an Industry 4.0 approach and will help to maintain Germany's position as a leading industrial and export country.

In Germany, everybody talks about the Fourth Industrial Revolution. The country ranks seventh in digital knowledge and online shopping is very popular. One in two companies uses applications of the Fourth Industrial Revolution. Many employees work from home. Employees

take a lot of sick leave and there is burnout. In Germany, employees are often paid on a project basis and not per hour of work.

In Bulgaria, the Fourth Industrial Revolution will have many negative aspects. The parliament and government are working on e-governance legislation. A national strategy has been prepared in response to the Fourth Industrial Revolution that pertains to the adoption of trends in the supply of and demand for jobs. The organisation and structure of work are expected to vary significantly. Companies must offer incentives to employees.

In Portugal, young people spend long hours on the internet. The disadvantages of using mobile phones include addiction, and young people are not protected. Video games promote violence and cause problems, including within the family. People feel stressed, nervous and fearful. The fact that children spend many hours in their rooms is a warning sign. They are gradually becoming isolated.

The government of Cyprus has recently decided to include the digital transformation of the economy in its planning. In this context, the establishment of a Deputy Ministry of Research, Innovation and Digital Policy is being promoted. The digital economy is the first area to be developing rapidly.

Business activities are being developed through hubs. The Cyprus economy could plan sectors such as culture, tourism and health collectively within a digital ecosystem, allowing the country to produce services around this concept.

4 New forms of employment

Social and economic developments have increased the need for more flexible relations in the labour market. A result of this need is the transformation of the traditional one-to-one relationship between employer and employee. Sometimes it is impossible to know who the real employer is.

Atypical forms of employment are usually characterised by non-standard working time, specific employment contracts or other less common labour relations.

- ***Online work: crowd workers***

Crowd employment is essentially a new form of organising the outsourcing of tasks that would normally be delegated to a single employee – in this case to a large pool of “virtual workers”.

Some platforms focus on low-skilled, short-cycle and repetitive micro-tasks or click-work such as data entry, content tagging or interpretation, finding information or database cleaning.

Crowd workers perform specified computer-based tasks or services. Crowd employment refers to working activities that involve completing a series of tasks through online platforms such as Amazon Mechanical Turk or Clickworker.

In reality, it is mostly very monotonous, low-skilled and low-paid work: digital management work with an anonymous pool of workers. Here, there is even a risk of child labour.

Other platforms focus on highly skilled, specialised tasks (such as creative tasks like the development of a new logo for a business). This kind of platform requires professional knowledge and competencies like design work, translation, and web and software development. Such jobs usually involve highly paid freelance workers.

- ***Offline work: domestic services***

Another type of platform work is on-demand work. Some domestic services can be ordered via apps such as TaskRabbit.

These kinds of services are usually related to low-skilled, medium-skilled, or specifically skilled, physical offline work. One can order house cleaning, pet care, short-term child or elderly care, furniture assembly etc. This kind of platform work has some positive aspects, because such services were usually undeclared in the past, but even now they belong to the so-called “grey zone”.

- ***Offline work: delivery and transport***

Another group of offline on-demand workers are those employed for “just-in-time” food delivery services such as Deliveroo, or taxi services such as Uber or Bolt.

5 Health and safety (H&S) issues

New technologies, new working methods and new forms of work not only bring with them new challenges for occupational H&S, but also have potential to make work safer and reduce workplace injury.

Official statistics from the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) state that approximately 2.3 million people are injured at work every year.

Robots or automated systems can replace workers in dangerous duty and unsafe jobs such as heavy industry, mining and agriculture.

Software or algorithms can be useful in boring, monotonous tasks such as accounting, call centres, invoicing etc.

New technologies can compensate for lack of workforce.

But new technologies can also create more H&S problems in the workplace.

New issues we may face:

- An increase in workplace stress and mental health issues
- Increasing screen time
- Sedentary behaviour
- Low levels of physical activity

Major risks of working with the internet include tiredness, musculoskeletal disorders, permanent exposure to electromagnetic fields.

Employees may work with laptops or other devices whose screens, keyboards and mice do not meet ergonomic requirements.

Employees may not know about the need for eye examinations and use the wrong lenses for screen work, which also causes visual disorders and related problems such as headaches.

They may work in a home environment or in a public space where the seat and work surface are at the wrong height or in an inconvenient position, leading to musculoskeletal disorders.

They may work in an environment that is inadequately lit, noisy, polluted, or too hot or cold to work in a healthy way.

Employees may work at high speed and without breaks, under pressure from short deadlines or the expectation of fast results, causing a heavy workload for the eyes and resulting in recurring visual impairments or work-related stress.

These employees do not usually receive proper H&S (or other) training.

But not only those who work with IT are potentially at risk.

Drivers providing a taxi service (Uber) run the risk of being attacked by a customer.

When providing small services at a customer's home, workers may be at risk of harassment by the customer.

It is also important to add that such offline workers may experience stress resulting from reputation rating systems linked to customer feedback.

6 Work-life balance 4.0

Technological developments mean that the digital economy can be independent of place and time. It is not necessary to go to the office to work.

Digitalisation brings with it new opportunities, but also creates threats to a healthy work-life balance.

During recent years, new forms of work have increased: spatially speaking, these include working from a home office or other public spaces.

The increase in these new forms has transformed the traditional one-to-one relationship between employer and employee, with both positive and negative consequences.

As mentioned above, almost one in five employees in Europe work from home or in public spaces at least several times per month.

But this means that they can potentially work 24 hours a day and 7 days a week.

On the one hand, people may improve their work-life balance and increase their productivity thanks to more flexible and individualised working hours.

But on the other, these new forms have increased the risk of self-exploitation, burnout and social isolation for people working from home.

It is important that employees working on telework contracts know how to manage time to avoid self-exploitation.

According to research, flexible working hours, autonomy and teleworking lead to an increase in overtime for employees, especially for men in higher occupations (managing staff).

People should have the right to disconnect and be free not to respond to work-related emails, phone calls or messages outside working hours.

They should have the right to take breaks, to be unavailable during leisure time and to have at least one work-free day per week.

7 Overview of seminars held

During the 2019/2020 educational year, six seminars were organised by EZA under the heading “Future of work – changing labour relations”.

7.1 The Fourth Industrial Revolution and the need for improved employee representation – New forms of employment and challenges for the European trade unions

15 – 17 May 2019, Limassol, Cyprus

KIKEA-DEOK (Cypriot Institute of Training/Education and Employment (KIKEA) - DEOK)

The seminar offered trade union leaders and other workers’ organisations and stakeholders an opportunity to hear and discuss keynote speeches delivered by experts on the Fourth Industrial Revolution and on the new forms of employment that have emerged in connection with it. National situations and trends in different EU member states were the subjects of analysis and of an exchange of views. The participants in the project shared presentations and observations of good practice for training on national, regional and EU levels. The seminar highlighted the need for and critical role of social dialogue in new forms of employment, in the pursuit of new skills and abilities aiming to improve employee representation. Finally, the seminar focused on effective means and objectives in social dialogue by discussing best practices – and failures – in the trade union initiatives and action plans implemented in the different countries so far.

The current critical challenge demands action and intensive social dialogue initiatives on both a national and European level. The seminar's overall purpose was to enhance understanding of the role of social partners and to reinforce their capability and responsibility to offer improved employee representation in the face of the new challenges of the Fourth Industrial Revolution. It was also designed to give trade union leaders and other state and private stakeholders the chance to discuss, analyse and react to common challenges faced by trade unions in connection with the new forms of employment in this new environment. Trade unions should have a part in the launching of national initiatives involving the social, employment-related and work-related facets of digitalisation and all major stakeholders.

The following issues were discussed in particular:

- Policies and strategic planning on behalf of the government
- Future of work: today, tomorrow, for ALL – European Commission
- Artificial intelligence: threat or opportunity
- Threats and opportunities of the Fourth Industrial Revolution in the member states
- How the Fourth Industrial Revolution is impacting the future of work and how qualifications and skills can be adjusted to the new environment
- The situation in the Cyprus labour market
- How education systems can be prepared for future changes – challenges and perspectives

Automation will create many new jobs. We cannot remain invisible spectators to these developments. We must make the most of this change, which will have both positive and negative consequences. Positive consequences include the improvement of competitiveness and the development of entrepreneurship and innovation. Food technology and space technology will help to fight incurable diseases. The new situation will lead to better living conditions. On the other hand, in view of the negative effects of automation, workers' organisations must safeguard jobs, introduce legislative provisions and establish supervisory authorities to prevent the abuse of technology as well as new policies to ensure the social character of the state. The role of all social partners in this is important.

The world of labour is changing. Unemployment in Cyprus has fallen to 6.5%. New jobs will be created but many will also be lost. The new forms of employment will make use of digital tools. The digital changes must be addressed through management policies in order to avoid unemployment.

There is no one single definition of artificial intelligence. It is the discipline that tries to create machines that will adjust to the environment and to human behaviours. But it cannot be suggested that everything is perfect. Google Translate, for example, does not offer accurate translations. Data must be analysed using special techniques. What is now available could be compared to the brain of a rat. The next step is the human brain. A lot more work needs to be done, and one of the problems is cost.

The European Union is working on an approach to artificial intelligence, but all member states must give this issue due consideration. There will be socioeconomic changes. Training is essential for businesses and talent must be retained within the European Union. The EU is working on guidelines for the application of products.

Artificial intelligence cannot compare to human intelligence. There is progress, and the use of machines serves people, but this does not mean that we should follow a path of great complexities. The smart robot will have greater potential.

But a machine or robot cannot have feelings or sensitivity. The systems are fragile. Machines will make mistakes, indeed serious mistakes with a cost to human life.

There can be no employees without businesses. Technology is advancing and there are opportunities for progress and a better standard of living. There are substantial shortages in economic areas. The state must provide both young people and existing workers with incentives and opportunities for development. Robotics is changing the situation in the labour market and through dialogue we must find solutions that will help employees to become indispensable in what they do and protect those yet to enter the labour market.

7.2 Fairness: development of new forms of work, self-employment and social protection in EU countries

23 – 25 May 2019, Jurmala, Latvia

LKrA (Latvijas Kristīga Akadēmija)

The seminar contributed to the complex issue of a qualitative and innovative understanding of new forms of work and labour innovations in general.

The European Commission put forward a proposal (13 March 2018) to achieve social fairness in two areas: 1) the free movement of workers

between European countries, based on the European Labour Authority, and 2) the guaranteeing of effective access to social protection in new forms of work and for self-employed people.

A second important aspect was the discussion around the European Pillar of Social Rights, which encompasses principles that need to be upheld across the EU.

Experts analysed labour market innovations, examples of modest social protection and the reality of the “grey zone” of employment between genuine self-employment and subordinate employment – and presented these in the seminar from a comparative European perspective. Special attention was paid to atypical forms of employment in the EU, usually characterised by non-standard working time, specific employment contracts and less common labour relations. A discussion was organised of the current state of the labour market in EU countries.

Participants in the seminar visited a leading Scandinavian and Baltic states software company, which gave them the opportunity to learn about the digitalisation of jobs, future trends in employment, and new kinds of remote services. A discussion was organised on the role of trade unions in the modern labour market. It was concluded that the role of social partners should be emphasised: there is still low trust in trade unions, a great need for educated workers, and more to be done towards employers being involved in the economic debate of the EU.

Topics were discussed in connection with the main issues of the project “Fairness: development of new forms of work, self-employment and social protection in EU countries. Future of work: changes in labour relations”.

Some of the topics discussed during the seminar were:

- Reflections on labour market development in Latvia in comparison to the rest of Europe
- The economic situation: the labour market and the future prognosis of labour development in the context of the EU
- The modernisation of labour relations: the main dimensions of labour relations in the EU
- The future of work in Estonia: on the way to flexibility and self-realisation
- Legitimate online work and home working for men and women as a challenge: mission (im)possible(?) in the EU
- Self-employed taxpayers and social security
- The problem of lack of workforce and innovative solutions
- The impact of modern technologies, digitalisation and new labour forms in enterprise: remote work, crowd work, flexible work, etc.

7.3 How trade unions can ensure decent work and employment protection: tackling growing labour market insecurity

29 – 31 August 2019, Sofia, Bulgaria

PODKREPA (Confederation of Labour PODKREPA)

The *objectives* of the seminar were as follows:

1. To conduct an exhaustive exchange on the need to introduce amendments in policymaking and to implement more effective trade union actions to shape the increased flexibility of labour and the new forms of employment.
2. To discuss practical steps and tools for addressing the emerging new forms of work, including activities to guarantee fair working conditions, adapted social security schemes, health and safety, access to lifelong learning and career prospects.
3. To point out concrete trade union actions and policies aimed directly at overcoming the negative effects on job security.
4. To set up a short list with priority areas for trade unions to stop the decline in membership.
5. To reaffirm that there is no alternative to social partnership and dialogue, that core workers' interests and rights must not be replaced by false, flexible arrangements and short-term decisions. Because only collective protection with a negotiation model for the regulation of all employment relations provides a guarantee for a decent life.

Key ideas

- Trade unions are currently challenged by an increasingly diversified world of work. It results in a flexible labour market, reducing job security. As employment insecurity is increasing constantly, reaching as high as 32% of all jobs, trade unions should mobilise to oppose this. The next five years will be decisive for workers' organisations because of the new European Parliament, Commission and the forthcoming activities of the European Labour Authority. The key issue here is the real involvement of workers' organisations in modernising the existing social security and labour legislation.
- Trade unions should continue pursuing the full implementation of the principles of the European Pillar of Social Rights by safeguarding and extending labour and social rights to new forms of employment.
- Demographic and social policy should reclaim their central role in the EU Agenda. To address the new realities of dynamically changing industrial relations, it is obvious that we need amendments to national and international labour and social security legislation.
- Social security systems should be reviewed and upgraded, and opportunities for the legal regulation of all new forms of employment should be considered, so as to retain the flexibility that they require on the one hand, and to ensure greater protection for workers on the other.

- Trade unions must work towards new legal frameworks to ensure the right to lifelong learning and social and labour protection for platform and non-standard workers in new forms of work.
- This requires a new vision of the role and activities of trade unions. They must provide more services, get closer to “digital workers”, conduct a membership campaign, look for allies, revise the content of collective labour agreements, increase the visibility of solidarity and industrial actions, communicate better with the general public, and try to restore trust in workers’ organisations.
- In many cases, the trade unions’ greatest problems are apathy and disinterest among workers and fears from employers.
- One of the most pressing problems in Bulgaria is the possibility of an aggregated calculation of working time. This possibility should be limited in order to eliminate the danger of increasing the pressure and stress on employees to work extra hours.
- For more than 20 years, the EU has faced brain drain and labour mobility from its eastern to its western part. It is time to re-balance EU policies and invest more in Eastern Europe – and to target those investments in order to solve the very pressing social problems.
- We must not undermine the need to tackle informal practices in the formal economy, and to try to reach workers in outsourcing companies.

Conclusions and recommendations

A process of modernisation, revitalisation and renewal of workers' organisations should be implemented around three main pillars:

Firstly, trade unions should initiate a radical transformation of EU and national provisions with a view to creating portable social security benefits, which are increasingly important in today's fast-changing and mobile world of work.

Secondly, trade unions need to propose innovative and effective legal solutions that guarantee coverage, decent wages and appropriate working conditions in all forms of employment.

Thirdly, trade unions must uphold social cohesion by promoting a new solidarity and organisational culture in society.

Social dialogue outcomes – both in securing legislated labour protections and rights such as safety and health, overtime, and family/medical leave, and in enforcing those rights – should become more visible to the general public.

Additionally, good co-operation with other social actors, combined with sound legislative proposals, may contribute to the building of a societal alliance against inequality and precarity and for more democracy at work.

7.4 Labour-market disruption and the future of work in the “No Collar Economy”: policy challenges for social protection and skills training in the EU

20 – 22 September 2019, Seville, Spain

CEAT (Centro Español para Asuntos de los Trabajadores)

Speakers included MEP Pablo Arias, who explained the guidelines and decisions adopted by the EU on digitalisation as a transversal process. His talk was based on concrete examples and situations in which new technologies play a role, e.g. working tools. He ended his presentation by explaining that the digitalisation process must be quick and easy to achieve, that synergies benefit the quality of work and the reconciliation of work and family life, and that they are consistent with competitiveness and mobility.

Other presentations dealt with the fields of activity of present and future workers, and with the dynamic role of innovation. This question was illustrated with straightforward and everyday examples.

Participants had the chance to get to know and analyse new forms of job opportunity that affect all workers – but especially young people – in their search for their first job. The market is changing. As was said in a lecture, it needs workers not only with knowledge but also with the skills and competencies to respond to future demand: 6 out of 10 employees with a permanent job will have to work in a new position when they next change jobs. The digital economy has the potential to create many job opportunities, so workers must be aware that they need to adapt to market and industry demands throughout their lives.

Key topics included digitalisation in the workplace, competitiveness, mobility, adapting workers to new situations throughout their working lives, labour market integration and education systems.

Results of the discussions

As a result of the presentations, the contributions of the participants and the round tables, ten decisions were taken:

1. The changes in the labour market must be viewed as opportunities, both for workers and for businesses, for entrepreneurs and for social actors. They must seek alternative ways to create new jobs and regulate and upgrade them to ensure safety and minimise job insecurity.
2. The impact of the digital economy as a driver of change and job creation does not extend to all social sectors, which is why CEAT demands the implementation of clear and precise rules regulating the full diversity of jobs, so that all positions are subject to controls and taxation criteria.
3. CEAT recognises the need to modernise the education system at all levels of education so that what students learn in the classroom is directly related to the skills and abilities they need later for integration into the productive sector. This requires the development of projects that promote the relationship between educational institutions and companies.
4. There is currently a plethora of “worker collar colours” that are gradually blurring and emerging as new niches. CEAT supports and promotes the training of workers in the fields of digitalisation, foreign languages and innovation, as well as technological skills, as a guarantee of adaptability in the face of changes in jobs.

5. Given the job insecurity affecting new positions arising in the digital economy, CEAT advocates that the EU should establish a precise and uniform regime for all member states of the Union.
6. The demand for highly skilled workers with technological knowledge and skills, along with the need to maintain forms of work with more manual activities, requires that social organisations strive to adapt quickly and swiftly to ensure the employability of all groups of workers. CEAT advocates further training in the course of working life – be it through companies, universities or social actors – as an element in the professional development of employees in companies.
7. CEAT invites traditional unions to engage fully in development and digital updating, to adapt to changes in society and business, and to become a useful tool in today's society.
8. CEAT promotes social support to workers and trade unions, to enable them to meet the challenges of the digital economy and new technologies in a way that reconciles professional and private life and maintains the competitiveness of workers.
9. New technologies and artificial intelligence must enable us to find answers that governments and societal actors can use to create new jobs and guarantee the welfare state. It is imperative that we respond to the demands for environmental protection and sustainability.
10. Public-private co-operation must be intensified as an integral part of efforts to ensure maximum employability.

7.5 Digital work: between the desire for self-determination and the need for statutory provisions and labour law regulations

17 – 19 October 2019, Ostend, Belgium

ECWM - EBCA - MTCE (European Christian Workers Movement)

The main theme of the seminar was the phenomenon of digitalisation and its impact on the lives of workers. In accordance with the See–Judge–Act methodology, speakers first provided the participants with different perspectives on the digital world.

Luc Cortebeeck (International Labour Organization - ILO) shared the history of the ILO, its objectives and priorities, and in this way presented the steps to be followed and the challenges for the ILO in this digital future. Entrepreneur Michael Hellweger (South Tyrol) reported on a computer company, mentioning specific dangers and opportunities for the economy, and presenting models for the regulation of working time – how the company solves this specific situation in relation to its employees. Pierre-Marie Molinier from the trade union confederation CGT France captured the perspective of a worker at a Bosch plant in the South of France and contributed concrete experiences of change at work. In the judging phase, the adviser on social and economic affairs of the Commission of the Bishops' Conferences of the European Union (COMECE), Markus Vennewald, presented the perspective of COMECE on the future of work and the development of the recent document "Shaping the Future of Work". The last paper, delivered by KVV South Tyrol and MTCE Coordination Group member Karl H. Brunner, reflected on the misunderstood work ethic and highlighted the need to overcome a narrow vision and prepare for possi-

ble future models. Among other points, he emphasised sanctifying Sunday as a holiday and day of rest.

Collectively, the papers laid the foundations for the work in three groups (the acting phase). In each of the three group sessions, the participants sought answers to questions posed, and tried to define objectives for the future work of the MTCE and affiliated movements within the context of the phenomenon of digitalisation. Visits to two social projects were also part of the programme: FMDO (federation of people of migratory origin), working with groups of migrants in Belgium, and Fietsbib (bicycle library), a network that offers bicycle loans to children up to twelve years old, both volunteer-supported initiatives.

Results of the seminar

Among the key points mentioned repeatedly during the seminar was the importance of highlighting that each individual must continue to be respected as a person, despite the fact that technological evolution is faster than the evolution of human thought and the political processes that can channel these changes. The need to use digital media moderately and with some self-awareness was highlighted, and the impact of digital technologies on the lives of families and on the reconciliation of work and family life was emphasised. It was highlighted that technological advances must not occur at all costs, and that it is necessary to take into account all ecological issues. Furthermore, it was emphasised that work must be stable and guarantee the workers a decent life.

7.6 Distribution of prosperity and power: more democracy in the workplace

20 – 23 February 2020, Praia Grande, Sintra, Portugal

CFTL (Centro de Formação e Tempos Livres)

The seminar focused on three policy tools:

- Democracy in the workplace
- Progressive tax systems
- Collective bargaining structures

The implementation of these tools allowed Europe after World War II to become a centre of social and economic progress in the world.

Democracy in the workplace, and the participation of workers in decision-making processes within the institutions in which they work, are seen today in terms that oscillate between perplexity and outright hostility.

In part, this is the historic result of the actions of coalitions of forces aimed at hindering such participation – as was the case with the co-operative movement in Portugal. But it is also a product of the gradual triumph of monist currents in management, which – by failing to recognise the difference in interests between workers and employers – downplay the importance of collective action and social dialogue.

This is all the more regrettable since several studies have demonstrated that worker participation brings clear benefits to productivity, worker satisfaction and health and safety in the workplace. It is therefore of urgent importance to foster trade union access to workplaces and to promote a culture of participation within companies and other employing institutions.

The progressivity of tax systems is another major policy tool for fighting inequality. One of the more striking civilisational advances of the past two centuries was the transformation of taxes from a kind of extortion aimed at guaranteeing the state's repressive and military capacity into a fully-fledged mechanism for redistribution.

Indeed, modern progressive tax systems operate against inequalities on two levels: directly, by targeting the richest with the highest tax rates, and indirectly, by using tax revenue to fund the social functions of the state (education, health, social security, culture and environmental protection) and universal public services that guarantee the wellbeing of the population.

Unfortunately, the efficacy of this tool has been undermined in the past three decades by the increasing weight of regressive taxes (such as VAT), the low taxation of unproductive wealth (rents, property and capital gains) and financial capital, aggressive fiscal planning on the part of companies and other promoters, fiscal competition between states and jurisdictions, even in the interior of the European Union, and the persistence of tax havens.

The taxation of property and capital has been so weak that, in Portugal, employers' mandatory contributions to social security have become more effective than taxation itself as a means of guaranteeing some form of contribution on the part of companies.

Thus, there is an urgent need to increase progressivity in the taxing of income, to extend its scope to include rents and property, and to fight for a higher level of fiscal harmonisation between the member states of the European Union – namely by supporting the proposal for a directive on the common consolidated corporate tax base.

Trade unions should also fight for a fair tax on financial transactions and support the efforts of the European Union and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) to combat tax evasion and fiscal elision. Workers' organisations should also engage in education on progressive taxation as a key tool for combating inequality.

Finally, the central role of collective bargaining in the reduction of inequality should also be stressed. Collective bargaining allows the signing of sectorial contracts which set the terms of reference for workers and companies with regard to wages and working conditions. The advantages of collective bargaining for workers are obvious. Without it, workers would be completely at the mercy of the whim of the employers, who would then be free to set whatever contractual terms they pleased. But collective bargaining also has significant advantages for employers as a way to prevent social dumping and unfair competition between companies.

Unfortunately, collective bargaining has never been a prime focus of neoliberal policies. This was illustrated in Portugal during the early 2010s, when the attack on collective bargaining was a key element in the adjustment programme promoted by the troika.

The result was a drastic fall in both the number of sectorial contracts signed and their scope. This fall was so deep that collective bargaining is yet to recover its pre-crisis levels – a fact that has undermined

the capacity of an increase in minimum wages to promote a general increase in wages in the country. As a result, the proportion of workers to which this minimum threshold applies has been on the rise, reaching 20% in 2019. It is therefore paramount to recover the dynamics of collective bargaining, increasing the number of workers that it benefits and the scope of its coverage.

This seminar concluded that the promotion and defence of these three tools must be at the heart of the agenda of workers' organisations, and that all efforts should be made to spread knowledge of it among their members and workers in general.

Only with a broad-based, determined and European-wide effort will it be possible to influence public debate on this matter and to reverse the current trend of growing inequality.

8 Conclusions

New technologies and globalisation are increasing work insecurity, making it easier for employers to escape employment regulations and undermine workers' traditional orientation to collective action. This also weakens the ability of trade unions to defend decent working conditions and the employment rights already acquired.

Changes in labour relations create new challenges for workers' organisations.

The situation is not the same as 20 or 30 years ago, when it was easier to organise people into trade unions in large factories with 5,000-10,000 employees. Many industrial companies have relocated production to low-cost countries, and workers' organisations have faced a drop in membership.

Small and medium-sized enterprises are the backbone of the European economy and such companies are usually against trade unions.

In the face of these challenges, trade unions should act to halt the decline in their membership, to reaffirm their public status and to increase the effectiveness and the visibility of their core actions and outcomes.

Nowadays trade unions can no longer solely be a movement for advancing claims and seeking to increase the wages of its members but must grow into a force that carries out particular social tasks on behalf of the labour force – safeguarding decent work, work-life balance, equality, vocational training, and recreational and health improvement.

9 Recommendations for social partners

Globalisation processes in the labour market, the digitalisation of modern labour relations, “grey zone” employment, workforce migration in the EU, precarious forms of employment, and changing labour relations (domination of small enterprises, more individualised work, intensive work, vanishing of collective interests, digitalisation of work, remote work, posting, platform work, crowd work) – all these call for fast and adequate action from social partners.

- Reduction of the negative impact of digitalisation

Trade unions must have a strategy for reducing the negative impact of digitalisation. Of course, they cannot fight progress and do the same as the Luddites in the nineteenth century, who destroyed textile machinery as a form of protest. But they must safeguard jobs, establish supervisory authorities and introduce legislative provisions to prevent the abuse of technology as well as new policies to ensure the social character of the state. The role of social partners is to guarantee the proper use of new technologies.

- Regulation of the platform economy

One of the most important tasks for social partners is to regulate the online and offline platform economy and other new forms of employment, and to find a way to pull them out of the “grey zone”.

- Social dialogue 4.0 – Equal opportunities and equal rights

Current social dialogue does not cover new types of employment. In some countries, self-employed people are even barred from joining workers’ organisations. All kinds of self-employed workers from across

the platform economy should be represented by trade unions. The right to join a trade union should be equal for all types of workers.

- Quality of jobs

In reality, many people do platform work because their other source of income does not provide them with enough. Platform workers very often stay in the “grey zone” and work in entirely unsafe working conditions. Trade unions should focus on the quality of jobs. Technology should create better standards of living.

- New legal frameworks

Trade unions must work for new legal frameworks to ensure the right to lifelong learning and social and labour protection for platform and non-standard workers in new forms of work.

- Opportunities for disabled people

European legislation on accessibility may help people with disabilities become more active. Digitalisation may help them to become more recognised as valuable members of society. The role of social partners is to protect these people against discrimination and help them in the labour market.

- Balance between labour demand and labour supply

One of the most important tasks for social partners remains that of finding measures to correct imbalances between labour demand and labour supply. It is still a reality that there is a high demand in some sectors and occupations, while in other sectors there are high rates of unemployment.

- Changes in education

Action should be taken to modernise education systems at all levels in order to prepare students for the labour market. This requires the development of projects that promote the relationship between educational institutions and companies.

- Lifelong learning

Social partners should agree on a right to vocational training and re-education in new technologies.

The skills of employees should be updated properly. Employees must be adequately prepared in case they move to another position or their current job disappears. Lifelong learning systems should skill, reskill and upskill effectively.

- Membership

Trade unions must find ways to work in an age of new labour relations. They should offer services for self-employed platform workers. This requires a new vision of the role and activities of trade unions: they need to provide more services, get closer to “digital employees”, conduct a membership campaign, revise the content of collective labour agreements, increase the visibility of solidarity and industrial actions, communicate better with the general public, and try to restore trust in workers’ organisations.

- Co-operation with NGOs

Trade unions should review their strategy for working with NGOs and deal with them as partners, rather than competitors.

- Remuneration of capital and remuneration of work

Social partners should find ways to lessen the imbalance between the remuneration of capital and the remuneration of work.

- Fighting tax “havens”

Measures towards the proposal of a directive on the common consolidated corporate tax base must be taken on the European level for fiscal harmonisation between the member states of the EU.

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