

Conference on Digitalisation of Work

Issues relating to quality of work in the context of new
forms of work, Vienna, 19 September 2018

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Vienna, March 2019

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Foreword

The conference Digitalisation of Work was organised by the Austrian Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Health and Consumer Protection in the context of the Austrian Presidency of the Council of the European Union at Austria Center in Vienna on 19 September 2018. The event was co-funded by the European Commission.

The conference brought together more than 170 experts from EU Member States, EFTA countries, the Western Balkans, EU institutions and agencies, international organisations such as the International Labour Organization (ILO), the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the World Bank, as well as European social partners, non-governmental organisations and platform providers.

One of the three main priorities defined in the Austrian Presidency programme is "Securing prosperity and competitiveness through digitalisation". This topic is gaining in importance as new forms of employment have emerged or become more established as a result of societal change and the increasing use of digital technology which has facilitated new economic activities. Some of these new forms of work are changing traditional, direct employer-employee relationships and the way in which work is carried out and/or organised. New forms of employment offer advantages and disadvantages for both employer and employees. They may facilitate access to the labour market, although it is uncertain whether this is actually a stepping stone into "traditional" employment or rather contributes to labour market segmentation. What most new forms of employment have in common is a high degree of flexibility, and in some cases also a high degree of autonomy. Although both flexibility and autonomy are as such indeed desirable, they can also go hand in hand with job insecurity and social as well as professional isolation. Likewise, platform work, where supply and demand for paid work are coordinated via an online platform, opens up opportunities, while at the same time presenting challenges.

Building on the work of the trio partners Estonia and Bulgaria, the conference on "Digitalisation of Work – Issues relating to quality of work in the context of new forms of work" focused in particular on organising new forms of work as well as work and employment relationships in the platform economy. In addition to issues relating to working time and workload, virtual migration and algorithmic management, the conference also dealt with opportunities for co-determination and changes in employer-employee relations.

This conference report is structured in four sections. The first section contains the opening speeches by the Austrian Presidency of the Council of the European Union, the representatives of the European Commission and the ILO. The subsequent two sections ("Session 1 – Organising new forms of work" and "Session 2 – Organising work and employment relationships in the platform economy") include the speakers' presentations in abridged form and the main points made in the round table discussions, which were held after the individual presentations. The report ends with the fourth section comprising the concluding statements and conclusions.

The annex contains the conference programme, the concept note and the information note on the conference presented by the Presidency to the Council.

By providing a comprehensive overview of current developments in the fields of new forms of work, addressing both opportunities and risks, the conference has contributed towards outlining possible solutions aimed at tackling negative implications of platform work.

I hope that by bringing together key stakeholders and by presenting the latest scientific findings, the conference has been able to make a valuable contribution towards adding momentum and depth to the relevant debate.

Building on the findings discussed, appropriate framework conditions could be promoted at both European and national level to enable EU citizens to fully benefit and tap into the potential and opportunities offered by digitalisation.



Beate Hartinger-Klein
Federal Minister of Labour, Social Affairs, Health and Consumer Protection

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Opening Speeches



Beate Hartinger-Klein

Federal Minister of Labour, Social Affairs, Health and Consumer Protection

"Regulation always lags behind developments in technology – a gap we need to close as quickly as possible based on fair and socially equitable solutions."

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me welcome you most cordially to Vienna and to today's conference on "Digitalisation of Work".

A number of events organised in the context of the Austrian Presidency of the EU Council have focused on a topic that is not only of great concern to me, but also constitutes one of the major challenges to be addressed by EU labour markets.

We are all aware that digitalisation of work is a very comprehensive topic. It is not only a multi-faceted issue but also raises a wide range of questions. This was also reflected in the relevant discussions and the findings produced by the highly interesting conferences organised by our trio-partners Estonia and Bulgaria, and again highlighted at the informal meeting of the Employment and Social Policy Ministers held in Vienna this July.

The main topic chosen for today's conference, namely "quality of work and new forms of work", thus seeks to follow up on these fruitful debates and further explore the topic in more detail.

Despite the intensive ongoing debates, there are still many open questions regarding the impact of digitalisation on the world of work – and this relates particularly to new forms of work such as platform work. One reason is that new forms of work are developing at a dramatic pace, precisely due to digitalisation. Regulations thus always lag behind developments in technology – a gap we need to close as quickly as possible based on fair and socially equitable solutions.

Furthermore, it is still quite difficult to accurately assess the role played by platform work on the European labour market, as the data available on the number of platform workers varies greatly. As yet, not only do the figures differ greatly, but we are indeed just beginning to develop a common understanding of this form of work.

Apart from the rather well-known players, like Uber or the food delivery service Foodora – which you may have already used yourselves – there are also a number of relatively unknown platforms on which computer work is performed online, or on which highly qualified specialists, for instance, compete for contracts on a global scale in areas such as design or architecture.

Today, the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (Eurofound) will present some of the results produced by the survey it conducted about conditions of work and social protection of platform workers.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Another topic we will focus on at today's conference is the question of how the individual Member States and the European Union are to deal with the effects of this dynamic development of digitalisation on the labour markets.

Today's conference also seeks to contribute to promoting appropriate framework conditions at European and national level to enable EU citizens to actually tap into and fully benefit from the opportunities offered by digitalisation – while at the same time enjoying sufficient social and labour law protection.

In line with the motto chosen by the Austrian Presidency of the EU Council "A Europe that Protects", Europe must protect its employees, and naturally, this also applies to platform workers. Building on the pillar of social rights, the European Union may encourage Member States to promote social aspects in the context of digitalisation and, by observing the principle of subsidiarity, may make an important contribution towards protecting workers and ensuring the sustainable financial basis of our systems.

Today's conference has brought representatives from EU Member States, EFTA countries and the Western Balkans to Vienna. A warm welcome to you. It is also a pleasure for me to welcome our important partners, the representatives from the European Commission and the European Social Partners. When talking about quality of work, the contribution of the International Labour Organization and its representatives is always highly relevant.

Representatives from the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (Eurofound), the European Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the World Bank and the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (CEDEFOP) have also come to Vienna today and will contribute to promoting common understanding. Representatives from platforms and many other experts have accepted our invitation to discuss the opportunities and challenges offered by new forms of work and to jointly develop solutions to these EU-wide challenges. Thank you all for coming.

I am already looking forward to the presentations on the latest findings and results produced by surveys and studies and to interesting round table discussions.

Let us continue and even add momentum to this process, by jointly working towards pro-actively shaping new forms of work.

Before handing over to Barbara Kauffmann from the European Commission, I would like to thank the European Commission for co-funding today's event.

I wish us all an interesting conference.

Thank you very much.

Digitalisation of Work Conference 19 September 2018, Vienna



Barbara Kauffmann

Director, Employment and Social Governance Directorate, Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, European Commission

"This emphasis on the future of work shows a remarkable interest in and commitment to the future of the EU's labour market on the part of the Member States."

A very good morning, Madam Minister, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am absolutely delighted to be here in the wonderful city of Vienna. First of all, I would like to thank our host, the Austrian Presidency, for organising this conference on such a pertinent topic. As Madam Minister has already mentioned, digitalisation of work is a topic closely aligned with previous Presidency conferences, one held in Tallinn on "The Future of Work, Making It e-Easy", and the other one in Sophia, the high-level conference on "Future of Work – a Lifecycle Approach". This emphasis on the future of work shows a remarkable interest in and commitment to the future of the EU's labour market on the part of the Member States. Our Commissioner Marianne Thyssen and our Director-General Joost Korte, who unfortunately cannot be here today, share this interest in and commitment to the future of work and also this focus on quality of work. It is thus no coincidence that in July our Director-General published a report on the future of work entitled "Beyond Digitalisation".

We currently see that working life in the EU is being radically transformed by the combined effect of digitalisation, globalisation, aging and the growing service sector. Artificial intelligence supports the automation of tasks and the reallocation between workers and machines. It is thus important that we anticipate the extent and implications of such a reallocation so that we are able to better manage the consequences in a pro-active way. The estimates regarding the occupations that will be automated vary greatly and we also observe an increasing shift in focus away from occupations that may disappear towards tasks that may disappear. For instance, a study published last year estimated that if the current state of technology supply for production processes were to remain constant, a substantial share of the tasks of all jobs in Europe could potentially be fully automated. However, there are considerable differences between Member States. The study shows that, for instance, in Ireland the share of tasks that could be automated amounts to 21 %, whereas in Italy it reaches 45 % - a very high figure indeed. It is true that many of today's jobs may disappear in a few years' time, but it is also important to keep in mind that many new jobs, that do not even exist today, will be created. This means that many opportunities are emerging. We therefore have to prepare the ground to ensure they will actually materialise and that we can benefit from these opportunities. In fact, the number of ICT jobs is growing fast. In the last three years alone, many additional ICT specialist jobs have been created. And these jobs are also strong multipliers, which means that for each one of these jobs four to five other jobs, non-ICT jobs, are being created in the economy. E-commerce, for instance, has become

a key component of our economies in addition to physical trade. So, we have new jobs in logistics, marketing, product design and we also see the emergence of new services and thus new industries: Amazon, Spotify, Netflix – services that many of us are only just getting used to. I can tell you that as far Spotify is concerned, I am still struggling.

One of the consequences of all these developments is that the demand for digital skills has been growing rapidly over the last decade. A total of 40 % of employers already indicate that they have difficulties finding people with the right skills. And when it comes to digital skills, we know that they are required in nine out of ten jobs, yet only four out of ten Europeans have these skills. This represents an enormous challenge, and the EU's competitive position on the global scale as well as the overall volume of employment we can create strongly depends on how quickly and how well we respond to this challenge. What we also have to realise is that a change in the occupational structure – medium-skill profiles in particular have a higher chance of becoming redundant – may create inequalities. This is something we need to watch very closely.

The new forms of work emerging on digital platforms – as Madam Minister already mentioned – and the collaborative economy in general provide for more part-time, freelance and self-employed work. This means greater flexibility, sometimes an improved work-life-balance and of course supplementary income. This in turn, creates opportunities on the labour market and I think it is also noteworthy that a considerable number of people – especially young people – are indeed looking for such flexibility. Well, not only young people, but mainly young people, I think. Over time, we may also see better integration of women and older persons into the labour force. But it is also clear that these new forms of work create challenges for existing welfare systems and for our current labour market regulations. There are also valid concerns about working conditions and the quality of jobs, notably as regards people with a lower skills level. And this includes the issue of salary levels, insufficient access to social welfare protection – and the impact all this will have on people's living conditions. We must also be aware that more flexible work arrangements may not always be as regular or stable as traditional employment relations. So these flexible systems may not be in everybody's interest. What is more, the growing number of platform workers and other non-standard workers often have only partial access to or are actually excluded from social welfare protection. However, even when they are entitled to social welfare protection on paper they have difficulties in fulfilling the eligibility criteria such as the hourly threshold or the contribution periods.

In addition, workers with atypical contracts may find it difficult to make their voice heard in the absence of collective representation and without a social dialogue. But social partners and collective bargaining remain crucial for adapting to the new world of work. Just think, for example, of measures that foster companies' competitiveness and the work force's adaptability and resilience. At the same time, social partners have developed good examples for upskilling and reskilling people in the context of digitalisation.

Finally, we also have to acknowledge that linear career paths are becoming a thing of the past. The old model of having a job for life is outdated and no longer reality. We see multiple transitions with workers needing to retrain and reskill regularly in order to be able to adapt to new developments. This trend will become even more marked in the future. Looking ahead, it is clear that skills and education will become even stronger determinants for access to good-quality jobs. It all starts with a sound education, but if we want to be part of this new labour market it is equally important to maintain and update our skills. From the policy point of view, we have to acknowledge that digitalisation can have a positive impact on many people – provided it is accompanied by the right policies. This also includes a dynamic industrial policy and a favourable business environment, complemented by reforms that strengthen the resilience and adaptability of the labour market. An important element in this context is a functioning social dialogue and, as I have already mentioned, it is essential for our societies as a whole to acquire the relevant, high-quality skills that enable us to better respond to future challenges in the world of work. We know that jobs will be created while others will disappear and that many tasks will be affected. Changes are therefore inevitable and we should prepare for what is to come. We also need to provide timely and tailor-made support for those affected by job loss or transitions. Comprehensive support provided to Europe's workforce should therefore be based on upskilling and reskilling, providing access to employment services, income support and social services. The European Pillar of Social Rights contains principles relating to education and training, equal opportunities and social protection and these principles can indeed help us to seize the opportunities offered by the digital revolution and organise fair transitions. At the European level, the whole range of available instruments will be mobilised in order to implement the Pillar of Social Rights, including EU legislative and non-legislative initiatives, social dialogue, the European semester and EU funds. But we cannot do this alone. We need the Member States, we need the social partners, and we need society at large. Regarding the initiatives launched at EU level, I would like to mention only two of the many legislative initiatives put forward by this Commission.

Firstly, the new Directive on Transparent and Predictable Working Conditions that aims to ensure that workers with atypical contracts benefit from basic rights, regardless of the type of contract or employment relationship they may have. Secondly, a Proposal for a Council Recommendation on access to social protection was put forward which seeks to close the coverage gap and improve social protection for atypical workers and the self-employed. Furthermore, and in line with the New Skills Agenda for Europe, a focus is being placed on the need to upgrade vocational training and strengthen work-based learning, including quality through quality apprenticeships, and on recognising skills required outside formal education and training. In cooperation with other European Commission departments and services, we have set up a high-level expert group on the impact of digitalisation that will analyse the impact of the digital transformation on EU labour markets and advise on policy options. We plan to consult social partners so that the final proposal, expected in March 2019, will reflect the voices of both workers and employers. Evidence building remains a key component of policy making and I have already mentioned

the report published in July. My colleague Loukas Stemitsiotis will talk about this later. There are a number of other projects we are currently working on, for instance with the OECD on mapping the assessment of Member States' policy initiatives related to the emerging new forms of employment and facilitating dialogue between national regulators and key business actors. Finally, the topic of the future of work is also high on the international agenda. It is the subject of orientations by the OECD, the G7 and the G20 and also a core topic for the ILO centenary in 2019. Furthermore, we, the Commission, will organise a high-level conference on the future of work early in 2019 as a contribution to the ILO's centenary. In conclusion, I am looking forward to interesting discussions today and I wish all participants a fruitful debate.



Heinz Koller

Assistant Director-General, International Labour Organization

"More than four billion people or half of the world's population is still offline, with 75 per cent thereof concentrated in just twenty countries, such as Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Nigeria and Pakistan."

Dear Madam Minister,

Dear Ms. Kauffmann,

Colleagues from the European Commission and the other European institutions,

Representatives of the workers' and employers' organisations,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

May I first of all thank the Austrian Presidency for inviting us and for having taken the initiative in organising this conference. We are very glad about the continuing development of the discussion on the future of work. The Bulgarian Presidency, for instance, hosted the conference on a life-cycle approach to education and I believe that today's conference on digitalisation is a very good continuation. A lot has already been published about the phenomenon of digitalisation. It is associated with progress, but at the same time with a feeling of widespread insecurity and with something that may sooner or later deprive people of their jobs or lower the quality of their jobs. This human-versus-machine dilemma is not new. In early 19th century England the "Luddites" wilfully destroyed weaving machines that had taken away their jobs. The good news is that today nobody would think of destroying a computer or anything else. This is already a form of progress. However, fear still exists. People, in particular those performing low-skill tasks, fear that they may lose their jobs. Thus, finding new jobs has already become a really important issue. Others are worried about a potential dehumanisation of the world of work as a result of the increased use of robots, nanotechnology, AI and genetic engineering.

With regard to the world of work, it should be highlighted that digitalisation is not only likely to destroy jobs but also to create jobs. What we can, however, be sure of is that it is already profoundly changing the content of work and its nature. Indeed, the classic concept of work as we know it is changing. Ms. Kauffmann has just mentioned that the model where one stays in the same job with the same set of skills throughout one's entire working life, is most probably coming to an end. A radical transformation process is taking place. Non-standard forms of work are a common feature of crowd work, the gig-platform economy, click-work and the like. These forms of work have emerged as a result of globalisation, information technology developments, new internet-enabled business models, societal changes and sometimes also due to legislative developments. According to the OECD, the number of users of the two largest job-matching platforms has multiplied by fifteen in ten years, reaching 36 million in 2015. It is fair to say that non-standard forms of work are not totally new. After all, informal employment has already been an issue for decades. Today,

however, new forms of non-standard employment are on the rise around the globe, both in industrialised and in developing countries. The ILO as a global organisation provides insights into the whole picture. The development we are witnessing today is that part-time, short-term and self-employed forms of work are promoted through internet platforms, which are a very heterogeneous and multifaceted phenomenon. One of the problems governments are thus currently faced with is how to regulate these non-standard and informal forms of work. The questions raised in this context relate inter alia to labour law, social protection and collective bargaining. Currently, the platform economy plays a minor role in the economy as a whole, but is, however, growing rapidly, though unevenly, across and within countries. In Europe, for instance, it is advancing at an extremely fast pace, and the same holds true for countries such as the US, China, India and the Russian Federation. At the same time, however, we are witnessing a real digital divide – across the world and within countries, even among most digitally advanced countries such as Australia, there are still large gaps. More than four billion people or half of the world's population is still offline, with 75 per cent thereof concentrated in just twenty countries, such as Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Nigeria and Pakistan.

Ladies and Gentlemen – how can we achieve optimal development of digitalisation and ensure that each and every one of us can enjoy its benefits? The Mendoza Declaration adopted at the recent G20 meeting of labour and employment ministers on 7 September 2018 provides the relevant guidance. I quote: "We recognise the opportunities and challenges arising from work obtained or delivered through digital platforms. We are committed to promoting high quality jobs and decent work in the digital labour market". Similar wording was used by the EU in its Council conclusions of 7 December 2018. Clearly, the digital economy creates new job opportunities, especially in a world where unemployment and underemployment remain high. Around the globe, a total of 190 million people are unemployed, 65 million thereof are young people. A McKinsey paper noted last year that 30 to 45 percent of the working age population in the world is underutilised, meaning unemployed, inactive or underemployed. That is indeed a high percentage. We thus hope that the digital economy will create opportunities for various types of workers enabling them to enter the labour markets. I am talking about non-specialists, older workers, women with children and people with disabilities. There are indeed a whole range of opportunities out there which may contribute to reducing poverty. However, and with a view to putting it into some kind of perspective, surveys among workers doing platform and/or crowd work have so far shown a prevalence of young male workers with at least university degree-level qualifications. This shows that theory is one thing and practice is another. What do we have to do about that? Well, we have to undertake targeted efforts aimed at developing people's skills, focusing also on disadvantaged groups. The digital and platform economies have already modified demands in terms of specific skills, especially in occupations related to science, technology, engineering and mathematics. This is why policy decisions aimed at promoting active and passive labour market policies focus on skills development, training and learning in order to better accompany transitions to new jobs. Here the role of public employment services cannot be overstated.

How can we ensure equal treatment and non-discrimination for these workers in the gig economy? What mechanism needs to be put in place to enable them to enjoy the right to organise and bargain collectively, a concept which obviously is at the heart of the ILO? This is a challenge for all of us. Some changes have already been implemented by governments and social partners in order to regulate non-standard forms of employment in the digital economy. Again, I would like to refer to the meetings of the G20 labour and employment ministers. They have established some principles that focus on crucial issues related to platform work, such as workers' rights, working conditions and earnings, social protection and the fight against discrimination, data protection as well as social dialogue and collective bargaining in the platform economy. This, in our opinion, is the way to go.

We welcome the fact that the European Commission has put various items on the digital agenda. Ms. Kauffmann has already mentioned them. I do not need to list them here, but all those initiatives are certainly very much appreciated. There are already some examples of EU countries tackling these issues, a number of unions also offer services to independent platform workers, such as the Freelancers Union in Denmark, which provides insurance schemes to its members. The first ever collective agreement in the platform economy governing cleaning services has just come into force on 1 August 2018. What I want to highlight here is that due to the changing nature of work, social partners, trade unions and employers' organisations too also have to address and adapt to their changing roles. This is currently the topic of very difficult discussions, in particular within the ILO.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As we are here in Vienna, we should perhaps heed the advice given by Klemens von Metternich, who said: "Events that cannot be prevented must be directed." We cannot deny that the digital economy and new forms of work are already here. If we want to maintain and ensure decent work and human dignity also in the future, we must take up this challenge. There are definitely avenues to be explored and analysed, regulations and standards to be updated, new standards to be designed, also in terms of ethics and data protection. We in the ILO feel that many attempts have been made but that we need to proceed in a more systematic and coordinated way, based on social dialogue with full participation of employers' and workers' organisations. This is actually – and now I am obviously coming to my marketing pitch – the initiative on the future of work in light of the centenary of the ILO next year and we have set up a high-level global commission consisting of 28 renowned thinkers and representatives from all regions of the world, co-chaired by the Swedish Prime Minister, Mr. Löfven, and the President of South Africa, Mr. Ramaphosa. They are all looking at the issues that I have just described and will present their report on 22 January, which coincides with the start of celebrations marking our centenary year 2019. For us, however, the 108th International Labour Conference in June will certainly be the highlight of the year. Discussions will focus on some rather concise conclusions. We expect and hope that many Heads of State and Government will participate in the conference and address the ILO. We have indeed a very busy year ahead of us in 2019. Thus, we have also asked our national counterparts to organise

events in their countries and I hope that Austria will join in. We will, however, also organise global campaigns, such as a 24-hour global tour on 11 April, the date when the Treaty of Versailles was signed in 1919. Just as an aside, Chapter 13 of the Treaty of Versailles makes mention of the ILO.

Coming to the end, let me just highlight how much I appreciate participating in this conference and that I am looking forward to the discussions and to your analyses of the situation.

Thank you very much for your attention.

Session 1 – Organising New Forms of Work

Digital transformation and its effects on the world of work by Loukas Stemitsiotis

Head of the Thematic Analysis Unit, European Commission, Directorate for Employment and Social Governance

“The overall message is that investments in education and skills are the most important measures with a view to mastering the challenges of the changing world of work.”



Brief Summary

Currently, three so-called “megatrends” are having significant influence on the world of work and on the productivity of its economies: globalisation, demographic change and technological transformation. The impact of the latter, which is generally labelled as “digitalisation”, is investigated in the present study, focusing on the two important aspects of robotisation and platform work. On the one hand, these phenomena have very beneficial impacts, reflected, for instance, in productivity increases and the creation of new jobs in certain areas. On the other hand, however, they also confront us with challenges related, for instance, to social security and lead to decreasing employment in other areas. Success in mastering these challenges is strongly linked to providing relevant education and upgrading the workforce’s skills.

Presentation

The study discussed in this paper – “The Changing World of Work: Beyond Digitalisation” – was published in July 2018 and focuses on the current changes attributable to digitalisation in the world of work. The goal was to look into the impact of these changes with respect to social aspects, the quality of outcomes, the quality of opportunities, social protection systems and the role played by social dialogue.

The changes in the world of work can be illustrated quite well based on the following numbers: between 1993 and 2016, the operational stock of robots in the European Union rose from 100,000 to 430,000 – whereas the prices of robots decreased by nearly 60 % (in the US) in the same period and labour costs increased by more than 110 %. The effect of this development is visible in the total factor productivity growth (based on the value added per hour worked) of countries such as Belgium that has a high robot density in the manufacturing sector, where this total factor productivity growth is significantly higher than in countries with low robot density such as Finland. The question, however, is: what happens to employees who are replaced by the increasing use of robots?

The estimated percentage of jobs encompassing tasks which could soon be performed by robots and which are therefore subject to a high risk of being automatised varies considerably across the EU. According to a study by the European Commission, it ranges between 20 % in Ireland and nearly 45 % in Italy. Whether those estimates become reality depends on the way in which the current scientific state-of-the-art is translated into effective technology and whether such effective technology is actually used in production processes. However, as can be seen in the case of Germany – the country with the highest use of robots in the European Union – such forecasts do not necessarily have to become reality. Between 1995 and 2016, the number of robots in Germany increased by 214 %. At the same time, however, employment in the manufacturing sector decreased only slightly – namely by 7 % – while employment in the service sector increased significantly by 35 % in the same period. This shows that there was a parallel process of job destruction and job creation.

This can be explained by the fact that innovative physical capital seeks smarter human capital. Normally, employers initially invest in robots in order to increase productivity, but then comes a second phase: the increasing demand for skilled labour required to handle the robots. This is then followed by a third phase: investment in yet more robots, which again requires investment in human capital, i.e. the demand for specialists increases again. This parallel and continuing process keeps creating jobs.

Looking at platform work, we can say that it is currently still a relatively small phenomenon. In the EU only one in ten adults has experience of working in a setting arranged via a platform. Furthermore, only 2.3 % of the EU labour force earns a living from platform work, earning more than 50 % of their income by performing this kind of work. However, data from Uber's annual report shows that the number of active

Uber drivers in the US grew exponentially between 2012 (close to zero) and 2015 (more than 150,000), reflecting a clear increase in platform work.

At the same time, we are witnessing a rise in atypical forms of work – yet the link between this phenomenon and the increase in platform work cannot be clearly established econometrically. Permanent full-time work still remains the most common form of gainful employment. However, most of the other forms, such as part-time work, temporary contracts and self-employed work, are increasing. Among these types of work, the “self-employed without employees” – a phenomenon, which is very much linked to platform work and similar kinds of work – make up the biggest share. More than half of main-job platform workers declare that they are self-employed or partly self-employed. Over the last five years, employment involving platform tasks has grown faster than overall employment, and self-employment via platforms has grown much faster than self-employment in general.

The benefits associated with platform work and similar forms of work include flexibility and inclusion, which may have positive effects on the work-life balance. Work is not restricted to a specific time or a specific place and the labour market becomes more inclusive, as those who may be discriminated against in the standard labour types are being integrated, such as women who have to look after children. The disadvantages associated with these new forms of work relate to working conditions, job quality and their potential for adding to income inequality – the risk of poverty among solo self-employed workers is six times higher than the risk of poverty among full-time employees. Another issue here is social security coverage, which may be very low or even non-existent among part-time employees, the self-employed etc. This puts pressure on social security systems. The share of social security contributions paid by employers and employees is declining, while the share of general government budget spending on social security is increasing. This trend may even continue as a result of the developments explained above and due to our aging population.

The key message thus is that investments in education and skills are essential to managing the challenges of the changing world of work. EU education and training systems should promote the acquisition of new skills in a dynamic way and follow the market goal, bringing social investment in line with capital investment. A simulation for the Czech Republic shows very clearly that if 0.18 % of GDP were invested in education and training on both levels, i.e. on the level of both employees and employers, this would lead to a long-term 0.8 % increase in the country's GDP. This clearly illustrates that investment in training, education and skills promotion is the way forward.

The changing nature of employment relationships and its impact on maintaining a living wage by Wolfgang Greif

European Economic and Social Committee

"More and more employed people working in new and non-standardised forms of work have been pushed to the margins of social security protection. As this might affect the overall efficiency of those systems, mandatory social security insurance for everybody is becoming increasingly important."



Brief Summary

In his speech, Wolfgang Greif explains which measures the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) considers necessary in order to succeed in meeting the challenges of digitalisation and presents policy recommendations relating inter alia to employment, taxation, platform work etc. He also emphasises that the current developments in the world of work make strong social partners important actors in shaping a good future for everybody, a future in which digitalisation leads to a win-win situation for both employers and workers.

Presentation

The EESC is a social partnership model with a wide-ranging membership that covers trade unions, employers' and civil society representatives from all Member States. It provides advice and consultancy to its members in the legislative process. From a very early stage, the EESC has looked into the different aspects of digitalisation, has come up with demands regarding the digital market agenda and provided relevant

comments. Right from the beginning, the EESC stressed that it was important to consider digitalisation not merely as a technological matter which enables the reduction and cutting of costs. In the debate with the Commission on the digital agenda, many years had been exclusively devoted to this aspect of the digitalisation's impact on the world of work.

Against the background of today's dynamic developments, digitalisation holds both opportunities and risks, which are closely intertwined. In the manufacturing industry, for example, robotisation will lead to significant job loss, while the service sector will see an increase in employment. Especially in the service sector, the question of the future quality of work is a very relevant one: Will existing labour market institutions still be adequate, will the current protection rights and protection standards also apply to the new forms of work? This is certainly a major issue for the future, which also relates to flexibility, work-family life balance, income security, co-determination and many other topics.

Successful management of the digital transformation process generally starts with competitive success. Companies have to adjust their business models to the opportunities, challenges and requirements of digitalisation, which also implies placing a focus on minimising costs. This is precisely the aspect that has the potential to massively change the world of work. Existing constants such as tariff structures might thus be subject to substantial changes. If maximum efficiency becomes the main focus of activities, this might have a negative impact on healthcare, occupational standards, social security standards and educational standards. It is thus necessary to implement forward-looking policies at European, local and national level in order to ensure that the potential of digitalisation can be harnessed, while avoiding the traps. Political attention and interventions therefore need to focus on the design of future processes. It will also be necessary to look critically at one of the decisive factors that enables a win-win scenario for both businesses and workers: i.e. the comprehensive involvement of all social partners in this political design process, including employee representatives.

The Economic and Social Committee has already made a number of specific recommendations relating to digitalisation of the world of work. The first recommendation emphasises the need for collecting more statistical data and for conducting further surveys to support forward-looking policies. There is a need for data on the extent of non-standardised forms of work, forecasts on labour market development, data that better assesses the polarisation of work and the polarisation of incomes, as well as statistics on the extent to which new forms of work depend on and are influenced by variables such as gender or geography, and also which sectors are affected by tariff changes.

The second recommendation relates to atypical employment. More and more people work in the digital sector, and this means that current healthcare and social security standards will no longer be fully applicable. The applicability of tariffs and access to social security are no longer a matter of course for everybody. Against this backdrop, it is absolutely crucial that all relevant players arrive at a common understanding,

namely that the model of standard employment needs to remain the central frame of reference, even though its share is decreasing.

Digital change in the world of work is also a challenge for our society at large. More and more people who work in new and non-standardised forms of work have been pushed to the margins of social security protection. As this might affect the overall efficiency of these systems, mandatory social insurance for everybody is becoming increasingly important. It is necessary that workers also benefit from digitalisation, that they also benefit from the “digitalisation dividend”, considering the profits generated with the use of digital technologies. What is also called for is a reform of the tax systems so that the conventional sectors and the digital sectors become subject to equal taxation.

With respect to platform work, it is also important to clarify the status of brokers and intermediaries, not only with a view to recording them in statistics but also with regard to liability issues, or the terms and conditions of work and employers' obligations. Platforms are employers, so what are their functions, what are their responsibilities and who is responsible for supervision and control? What the EESC suggests is that the European Commission, the OECD and the ILO, together with the social partners, develop appropriate rules, provisions and regulations to create a humane work environment for new workers in the cloud.

Policy responses to new forms of work by Istvan Vanyolos & Mark Keese

“Sometimes we do not need to come up with totally new regulations, applying the old ones better might be enough.”

Brief summary

Mark Keese and Istvan Vanyolos present a study on the different policy approaches adopted by countries to address the changes in the world of work. They have identified countries that are introducing new legislative categories for dependent self-employed, countries which allow collective bargaining for dependent self-employed and countries which foster companies offering permanent working contracts etc. Two key messages can be derived from the study, one relates to the application of existing regulations, and the other to workers' co-determination in the world of work.

Istvan Vanyolos

Policy Officer, Employment Strategy Unit, European Commission, Directorate for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion



The idea behind the study was that prior to developing further policy recommendations it would be good to get a better understanding of the situation at Member States' level and to look into the reasons for different approaches or policies. The goal was first of all to prepare an overview of the policies on the ground and secondly to look for new ideas. Thanks to cooperation with the OECD, the study also investigates ideas from outside of the EU.

One concern regarding new forms of work is that their share of the labour market is increasing. According to forecasts, these forms of work will no longer be considered non-standard in a few years' time, but will rather become the dominant form of work. The Commission was also interested in finding out whether there are comprehensive strategies, looking for concerted efforts at a national level, whether there is coordination across different ministries, and whether legislation is being synchronised in response to the challenges. The survey therefore looks at separate policy categories (classification of workers, tax incentives, skills, etc.) but also examines whether there is an overall strategy behind such efforts.

Mark Keesee

Head of Skills and Employability Division, OECD Directorate for Employment, Labour and Social Affairs



The study presented investigates policymakers' responses to the challenges of atypical employment. It came to the conclusion that there are three areas in which countries were concerned about atypical employment. In the past, there was a binary classification (i.e. employees and self-employed), but today's "dependent self-employed" do not really fit into this classification as they work primarily for one client with very little autonomy. The question is how to tap into the potential offered by digitalisation with respect to maximising the benefits for workers in terms of greater flexibility or a

possible increase of inclusiveness, while avoiding the risk of precarity and lower incomes.

There has been a significant increase in the numbers of "dependent self-employed". Some countries such as Portugal, the UK, Spain and Austria have decided to introduce a third category for the dependent self-employed, seeing that these workers were in some ways closer to employees, yet did not have social security protection or workers' rights. The focus was also placed on developing better definitions with regard to what is to be classified as self-employment and what makes somebody an employee. Others strengthened the enforcement of existing rules, which leads to one of the key messages: sometimes we do not need to come up with totally new regulations, applying the old ones better might be enough.

The other key message is about giving a voice to non-employees. This is a key area of concern because often people in non-standard forms of employment have very

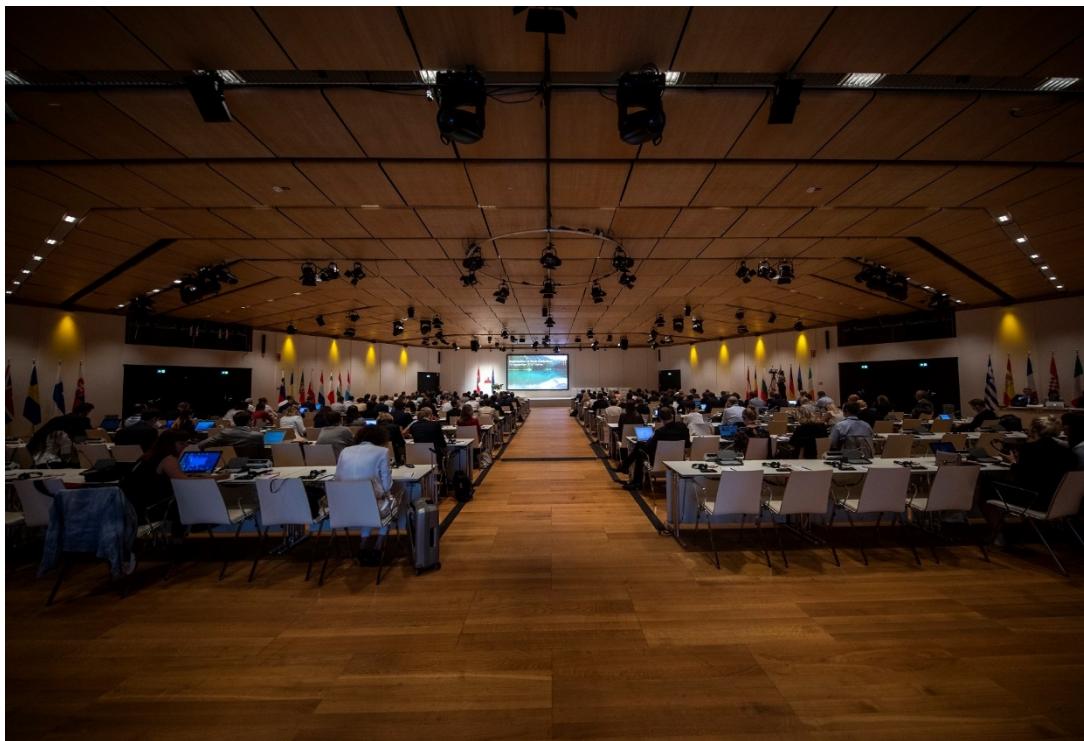
little access to collective representation and representation in general. In part, this is attributable to competition laws, which can actually prevent these workers from joining together to collectively bargain for higher pay, for example, because that would be against anti-collusion laws for the self-employed. These are important barriers which need to be addressed by policymakers.

Some countries have already changed their legislation, making it possible for platform workers to obtain the right to bargain collectively. This has already been the case in France, for instance. Another example is Denmark where the first collective agreement was concluded between a platform company and the workers working for this platform. Some countries have also improved access to social security for atypical employees. Italy, for example, now gives self-employed people greater access to standard social security benefits, and Portugal has also adopted a similar approach. Furthermore, specific programmes especially designed for certain types of workers have been developed and introduced, such as for atypical workers active in the creative and cultural field in Belgium. Yet there is also another possibility: in Australia, for example, the unemployment benefit system is not financed through social security contributions, which are in part paid by employers, but a universal benefit is granted irrespective of employment status. Another important topic is taxation and transparency of platforms when seeking to ensure that platforms are placed on the same level as regular companies in terms of social security contributions and taxation. In Estonia and France, for instance, platform companies are to collaborate with taxation authorities in order to ensure that platform companies declare the incomes received by their workers to the taxation authorities.

Coming back to permanent and temporary contracts, there are currently two approaches towards dealing with this topic. Some countries have tried to make it harder to use temporary contracts by putting limitations on the number of renewals, for example. Others have tried to reduce the gap between permanent and temporary contracts, thereby reducing the incentive to use temporary contracts. Financial disincentives, such as making companies which use temporary contracts pay higher unemployment benefit contributions, have been used. This approach is based on the fact that temporary workers tend to lose their jobs much more often, which means that they rely on unemployment benefits more frequently. These higher social security costs are thus evened out by higher contributions. Some other countries have introduced positive financial incentives for converting temporary contracts into permanent ones. In Italy and Spain, companies that convert these contracts are granted a reduction in their social security contributions.

The rise in non-standard forms of employment is, however, not only driven by globalisation and digitalisation. Labour market policies, social policies and taxation policies also play a substantial role in this context. The good news is that governments are becoming aware of these trends and have launched some very interesting reforms. As illustrated above, many have realised that it is not necessary to throw all of their established policies over board and start from scratch, but simply to adapt them to the changing environment.

Discussion



- Who should take care of regulation – is this a topic that needs to be addressed at European or rather at national level?

According to **Martin Risak**, digitalisation has such a wide-ranging impact on the world of work that it has to be solved at both European and national level. This issue needs to be addressed properly and we need to stop passing the ball from the national level to the EU level and back again. The OECD studies clearly show that it is possible to deal with this issue at the national level and the relevant approaches should thus also influence discussions at the European level.

Wolfgang Greif adds that it is not a question of either the European or the national level. Rather, both are called upon to become active with respect to labour rights, labour protection and collective bargaining questions, which is an area where the national states have a particular role to play. At the European level, he expects more pressure to be exercised on the Member States with respect to political coordination and the political agenda. In his view, the EU should assist Member States and, whenever necessary, bring its weight to bear also with regard to areas in which the national states themselves have the regulatory competence.

Barbara Kauffmann shares the view that action needs to be taken at both levels. She stresses that the main competence for labour law matters and social affairs rests with the Member States. She suggests that the Commission paper could provide a

basis for recommendations on better access to social protection. At the same time, Ms Kaufmann highlights that action in this area should not be limited to the EU level.

- With regard to persons with disabilities in the labour market, it was stressed that accessibility standards for digital products and services need to be guaranteed in order to ensure that they are able to work. Is the Austrian Presidency committed to promoting this?

Responding to this question, **Edeltraud Glettler** (Austrian Presidency) highlights the efforts undertaken in collaboration with the Commission and the European Parliament in order to include this topic in the triologue discussions and with respect to the relevant directive. Although negotiations on this topic are still ongoing, all stakeholders hope to successfully complete this process by the end of December.

Round Table on Session 1: Organising work in the context of new forms of work

Ursula Huws, Jon Messenger, Manuela Vollmann & Christian Bodewig

Ursula Huws - Professor at the University of Hertfordshire

"Platform workers combine many different kinds of occupational and professional activities in ways that make it very hard to classify them. In many cases, the complicated structure of their working lives makes it almost impossible for them to access traditional forms of social protection."



Brief summary

In her speech, Ursula Huws emphasises the increasing pressure on employees, especially on platform workers. Due to ICT and technological developments, workers have become available for clients or their superiors around the clock. The questions she raises are whether platform work is an emerging normative model of work organisation and what are the implications associated with its rise.

Presentation

Recent studies, including a survey conducted in eight EU countries, provided several relevant insights into platform work: Firstly, platform work is indeed becoming an increasingly widespread form of work which is growing rapidly. At the same time, we are witnessing a general increase in many other forms of what might be called "just in time" forms of work. Secondly, crowd workers typically combine platform work with many other forms of generating income. Only a small number of people do only platform work. It is extremely difficult to define what an online platform actually is. On the one hand, there are many commonalities between working for an online platform and other ways of finding work online, which are not covered by the general definitions of platform work. On the other hand, business models are constantly changing and any definition cast into a law, would probably be out of date within a matter of weeks. On top of that it is very hard to differentiate between platform work and other forms of casual work. Probably the easiest approach towards defining platform workers would be to describe them as part of the new working poor, people at the bottom end of the labour market who engage in many different forms of work in order to earn a living. They combine different kinds of occupational and

professional activities in ways that make it very difficult to classify them. As a result of this complexity, it is in many cases almost impossible for them to access traditional forms of social protection.

Platform work practices emerge and spread so quickly that one might ask oneself if a new normative model of work organisation is emerging across the whole labour market – a model in which workers are managed via online tools, carry out increasingly standardised tasks, are monitored remotely, and in which customer ratings are used to evaluate their performance. In some ways, this is the most disturbing development of all. Today, professional groups such as nurses or teachers are already managed based on customer ratings. This has major implications and will lead to de-professionalisation. This new normative model of work also increasingly includes such features as GPS tracking of workers, unpredictable working hours and pitching for each job or promotion. This means that workers are often required to be available 24/7 in order to respond to messages from clients and from employers. The strange paradox is that this new normative model of work is both more formalised and more precarious than traditional forms of work.

So, what are the wider social impacts of this development? One aspect, which has as yet not been studied in any great detail, but may in the long-term become the most important growth driver for the platform economy is that it has evolved into what is generally known as a socialisation of reproductive labour through the market. In 20th century Europe, the European model sought to promote equality between men and women by using state services to socialise reproductive activities such as childcare, homecare, healthcare etc. As state services are being cut back, new services are rising through the market to take their place. For instance, people who order meals from Foodora are very often not privileged, but simply too exhausted to cook or may have had their electricity cut off leaving them without any cooking facilities. They may also live in inadequate housing where they have to share kitchens. Thus it is the poor who use many of these services, and we may see the emergence of a new servant class who provide such services through the market, whether it be babysitting, household maintenance, cleaning, food delivery etc., without being covered by any of the protection mechanisms public sector workers used to have in the past. This raises important questions about the kind of welfare states we are going to see in the future.

Jon Messenger - Senior Research Officer, Conditions of Work and Equality Department, International Labour Organization

"Part-time telework and occasional mobile work seem to produce the most positive work-life balance – in contrast to highly mobile T/ICT work."



Brief summary

Jon Messenger presents a study on telework relating to recent developments in the world of work. He describes three different types of teleworkers, the homebased, the highly mobile and the occasional, showing the effects of the different types of telework on the worker's work-life balance. The study concluded that those who do highly mobile telework, known as T/ICT Mobile Work, have the worst work-life-balance.¹

Presentation

Telework as such is not an entirely new phenomenon. It has been around for about 40 years. It started as early as in the 1970s in California and has continued to evolve ever since. Today we talk about T/ICTM work (Telework / Information and Communications Technology Mobile work), which can also be described as the third generation of telework characterised by a virtual office, i.e. the smartphone or tablet, which we always carry with us. This virtual office is always available – at least as long as there is internet connectivity, which is, however, the case in most parts of the world.

In contrast to workers who do platform work and are the topic of many of the current discussions, the study presented focuses primarily on telework conducted by employees. Three types of teleworkers who work in at least one other location than the employer's premises several times a month have been identified: firstly, the regular, homebased teleworkers who work from home at least several times a month and in all other locations (except the employer's premises) less often than several times a month. Secondly, the highly mobile T/ICTM workers who work at least several times a week in at least two locations other than the employer's premises or at least daily in at least one other location. And thirdly, the occasional T/ICTM

¹ The study was conducted in collaboration with Eurofound. For the study, please visit: <https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/publications/report/2017/working-anytime-anywhere-the-effects-on-the-world-of-work>

workers who actually do the same kinds of things, either at home or at other locations, but less frequently and/or at fewer locations.

Teleworkers do not have a typical nine-to-five working day with a fixed start and a fixed end. They have higher working time autonomy, which is considered a major advantage as they may base their working schedules on their personal needs. In terms of work-life balance, overall results are better than one might expect. Nevertheless, work-life boundaries tend to become blurred due to work-to-home and home-to-work interferences. Work and life start to blend together, working time increases, personal time and working time become mixed. Although overall work intensity is generally higher, higher working time autonomy appears to offset this greater intensity, except for the highly mobile T/ICTM workers. Part-time telework and occasional mobile work seem to produce the most positive balance in relation to T/ICTM work. Mixing remote work and work in the office helps to keep workers connected with their fellow employees and with the organisation, while at the same time avoiding the potential negative effect of isolation.

While T/ICTM work is increasing, there are, however, substantial differences across the countries investigated, ranging from 2 % in countries such as Hungary up to 40 % in the USA. In general, men are more likely to perform this kind of work than women, while women tend to perform more regular, homebased telework. Women doing T/ICTM work tend to work shorter hours than men, and women seem to achieve slightly better work-life balance results.

Homebased teleworkers seem to have a better work-life balance, while highly mobile T/ICTM workers are the ones most at risk of negative health and wellbeing outcomes. Therefore, they are at the focus of efforts aimed at restricting supplementary work. Those who do partial and occasional forms of T/ICTM work seem to be able to strike a better balance between the benefits and drawbacks of this form of work. Whether this kind of work will supplement or actually replace office work is a very important factor, which affects the aspects in which the outcomes are positive or negative. If working in the office is substituted by working from home or from another location, the same amount of time or roughly the same number of hours will generally be spent working. But if work is done in the office and additionally in other locations then the number of hours worked will increase substantially, which may in turn increase the likelihood of negative effects.

Manuela Vollmann - Managing Director of ABZ* Arbeit, Bildung Zukunft AUSTRIA (Work, Education, Future AUSTRIA)

"Job sharing is a model which brings together two generations of employees in a tandem, sharing one job. Both employees can learn from one another and create added value for the company, even in management positions."



Brief summary

Manuela Vollmann dealt with new models of work, focusing on flexibility and predictability in the world of work. By adapting to the changing needs in the different stages of an employee's life, such models of work may improve the work-life balance for both women and men. In her talk she highlighted the importance of social business models which may facilitate social sustainability, gender equality and the quality of employment.

Presentation

When looking for ways and means to manage the current challenges attributable to the changes in the world of work, we must not limit ourselves to theoretical discussions in conference rooms, but rather engage in pro-active work. There are deficits, there are shortcomings and there are differences in how technology affects social cohesion. Technology needs governance, technology needs social innovation. It is thus necessary to influence technology and digitalisation to ensure that it meets these requirements.

Digitalisation and automation are often thought to primarily impact the industrial sector and the jobs within this sector. The related loss of jobs is indeed very relevant, but what is even more important is to ensure that no one is left behind as a result of this transformation of the world of work. It needs to be ensured that everybody will be able to participate in the world of work, not only those who drive digitalisation forward but indeed everybody who works. These new development trends have a vast potential, involving a multitude of factors and challenges, such as demographic change, aging, parents, young families, mothers and fathers seeking different work models within different cultures, all of which we suddenly need to accommodate. Therefore we all need to join forces in order to design the world of work for the future.

There is a need for entrepreneurs who are visionaries, who are daring enough to try out new forms of work – not only business models such as Uber. I am referring to small and medium-sized companies who are willing and ready to transform digital change into social cohesion. There are companies in Austria and other European

countries, but also in New Zealand and in the US, that have offered their employees a working time reduction without reducing their salaries or wages. This model has proved very successful and has improved both productivity and employees' work-life-balance. Another model is job sharing, which brings together two generations of employees in a tandem, sharing one job. Both employees can learn from one another and create added value for the company, even in management positions. There is a need for working times that are geared towards different life cycles and phases. As people go through different phases in their lives, their needs in terms of working regimes change, flexible regimes should be able to react to these differing requirements including parenting, aging, nursing and caring for somebody at home. Another aspect that plays a role here is that working time regimes should consider lifelong learning and offer sabbaticals. Everybody is in a different stage of life and thus education programmes also need to be compatible with people's private and working lives as they go through these stages.

Models such as these enable a better work-life balance, better reconciliation of the two spheres of work and private life, and therefore have an impact on gender equality between men and women on the labour market. Yet, digitalisation can only have a positive effect on people's work-life balance if companies and businesses do not only demand flexibility, but also ensure that workers can rely on a predictable number of working hours and predictable working times. Predictability is important for people, irrespective of whether they do paid work or engage in family activities. It is something that keeps them healthy and sane. In this context one should not forget that those who work in management positions also need a work-life balance in order to stay healthy. Irrespective of the company level they work at, lack of work-life balance will invariably have a negative impact on the company as a whole.

Another core issue in the context of digitalisation is related to the field of research and development and to the question of who the decision-makers are that decide on what is to be developed and designed. In Silicon Valley, where white young males rule the roost, we witness an enormous lack of diversity. Digitalisation, however, needs to be designed in such a way that enables everybody to benefit from it. It is important to keep in mind that, as things currently stand, some will benefit from these developments while others will definitely be put at a disadvantage. Austria and Europe can take the lead here and spearhead positive developments. Europe should not sit back and watch what the US is doing, it is strong enough to take action and play a pioneering role as a positive change-maker.

Under a social business model, economic approaches are combined with corporate responsibility. Especially in Europe such social enterprises will assume an even greater role in the new world of work. By combining social sustainability with economic and ecological factors they create the basis for building a responsible economy. Especially in times of technological change and digitalisation, social enterprises serve as important good practice examples. These enterprises are not only less affected by unemployment in times of economic crisis, but also boast appropriate structures for gender mainstreaming, thus also promoting gender equality.

Christian Bodewig - Program Leader Inclusive Growth, World Bank

"As employment becomes more diverse, social protection also needs to become more diverse."

Brief summary



In his speech, Christian Bodewig discusses an approach towards rethinking social protection in light of current changes to the nature of work, thus making the case for a guaranteed social minimum that is decoupled from employment and supported by several "layers" of social insurance and labour market policies. He also emphasises the potential for using new technologies in order to improve the services provided by social protection systems.

Presentation

The 2019 World Development Report "The Changing Nature of Work" makes a contribution to the way we think about social protection. Social protection in EU countries as well as in many middle and high-income countries all over the world has been much dominated by Bismarck and his approach to financing social protection through earnings-based contributions. Yet, in view of the fact that traditional, formal, open-ended full-time contracts are no longer the rule, a case can be made for rethinking this approach. In Albania, for instance, 40 % of employment is informal, in Serbia this share amounts to 20 %. Labour markets in this region, where many countries aspire to join the EU, are highly informal – which is an important factor that needs to be taken into consideration. As employment becomes more diverse, social protection also needs to become more diverse. There is a need for new ideas on what a more diverse social protection system could look like.

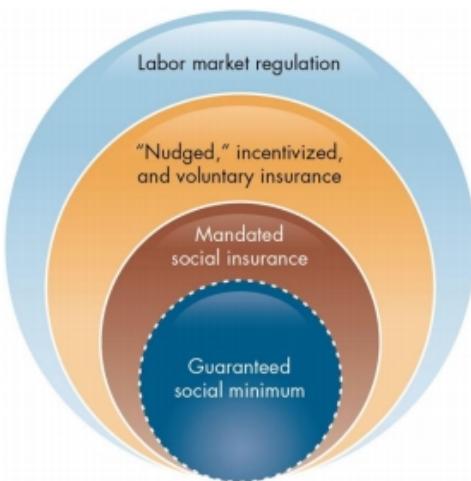
At its core, social protection is about a guaranteed social minimum, based on social assistance but complemented by subsidised social insurance – a basic insurance to insure individuals against catastrophic risks, which would not be covered by standard transfers from social assistance. Active labour market programmes that provide assistance in the event of job transitions are equally important. These types of instruments would not be formally job-based, but non-contributory in nature.

The second layer is mandatory social insurance. This is social insurance, which, in line with Bismarck's ideas, is focused on formal sector employment, and the question is how this could be expanded to also include new forms of work, provided that they are recognised and defined in a way that would enable mandatory insurance coverage.

The third layer would be making contributions to voluntary insurance schemes. People's willingness to participate in voluntary insurance schemes could be promoted by giving them a choice, offering support when they enrol in voluntary

savings programmes – maybe through some kind of subsidy – but generally by “nudging” them to some extent.

Lastly, social protection systems need to be flexible in order to avoid a situation where there are on the one hand highly protected formal sector workers and on the other hand workers for whom there is not really much protection at all. Another important aspect that must be highlighted is that across the EU social assistance programmes vary considerably as regards coverage and adequacy of support. Likewise, active labour market programmes also vary significantly across the European Union.



The graph shows the four layers of social protection described above. They are organised as circles, the higher levels surrounding the lower ones, starting with the guaranteed social minimum in the middle.

Digital tools offer excellent opportunities for simplifying social protection, making it easier to administer but also ensuring that it focuses more on people's needs. Examples from around the world, dealing inter alia with identification systems and registries, show how big data can be used by employment services to provide

input for training and to meet local and emerging demands, and how AI can be used for competence-based matching and facilitating access to information. They also show how automation can be used to free up time required by counsellors and social workers thus increasing the amount of time they have available for their clients.

Discussion



- Which skills will be necessary to succeed in a world of work marked by digitalisation?

Ursula Huws holds the view that the key question with regard to digitalisation of work and skills is how the latter are assessed. The trend towards customer rating is an important issue here. Black Uber drivers receive lower ratings than white Uber drivers, for instance, and female university lecturers get lower ratings than their male colleagues. Moving towards a system where skills are assessed by the general public in some kind of bottom-up approach raises very serious questions about how to maintain professional quality and occupational standards.

Christian Bodewig favours an approach that subdivides skills in three dimensions: one is foundational cognitive skills, such as reading, literacy, numeracy and problem solving. The second is behavioural skills, such as the ability to interact well with others and to finish tasks on time. The third is technical skills, such as the ability to operate a machine. It is, however, difficult to predict what kind of technical skills will be needed in the future. What is known, however, is that there will be a need for strong cognitive and behavioural skills. Yet, a significant share of Europe's youth lacks adequate basic cognitive skills such as reading and maths skills. This issue should therefore be addressed as a matter of priority.

- How can we ensure that similar services provided in the online and in the offline world are treated equally?

For **Ursula Huws** this raises many other questions. We are already witnessing an erosion of the level playing field. Employment agencies in Europe are, for instance, quite tightly regulated, but platforms that offer employment are not regulated in the

same way. For Huws, the initial top priority for regulators needs to be that they look systematically at existing regulations in order to find out if and how they can be applied to online platforms.

■ How to define atypical work?

Manuela Vollmann turns the question around and asks how we can define typical work and whether or not it still exists. Another question that is becoming increasingly important against the background of digitalisation and technology is the definition of gainful employment. Other questions that need to be addressed are: What is informal employment? What is voluntary work? What kind of work can be defined as having a value? It is also necessary to undertake a detailed analysis of these questions.

Ursula Huws states that Europeans in particular seem to be very emotionally attached to the normative model of work that has emerged since the end of World War II and serves as the basis for the concept of what is regarded as having a regular job, i.e. being permanently employed, having a job for life. Under this concept, falling ill and thus becoming unemployed is an occasional misfortune for which you are fully covered by social safety nets, which differ from country to country. This concept has been presented as a desirable model to the rest of the world, although this normative model has never worked for everybody. It has never been particularly good for immigrants or for women, and there have always been people who were either not covered or indeed excluded. We, as Europeans, are thus called upon to determine the underlying principles that are important to us and corroborate the basic model. Which of the universal rights should in our view be indeed universally applicable to all workers? We should always endeavour to prevent exploitation, but how do we define exploitation and how could these principles be formulated in a new way so that they are more generally applicable to all kinds of work that will emerge in the future?

■ Is flexibility really beneficial for workers who depend on the income they earn, whose wage-setting power is weak and whose hourly wages are low?

Christian Bodewig makes two comments on flexibility. First of all, both in discourse and in reality, flexibility very often ranks higher than protection – but this is the wrong way around. Social protection systems should work and enable people to move between jobs. Secondly, in the European labour markets a significant part of the workforce holds open-ended and formally relatively well-protected employment contracts. This tends to be true for older workers. At the same time, however, many younger people in temporary employment and doing other forms of work are not so well protected. Such a double standard, which tends to be organised along generational lines, is not good for society. This raises the following question: Is it possible to develop a scheme that is more inclusive, that evens out the differences in the degree of protection between the different types of employment? Although this is a highly challenging task, it is indeed worthwhile as it will be necessary to address these issues.

- Jon Messenger - When saying that women achieve better work-life balance results, do you assess that based on the level of part-time work? Isn't this in fact the reason for a very poor work-life balance?

Jon Messenger's quick answer to this question is no, the assessment was not based on part-time work. He also points out that what is measured is the women's subjective perceptions of their work-life balance, which cannot be defined as clearly as, for example, the type of contract they have or details about their specific work arrangements.

Manuela Vollmann emphasises that the increasing demand for flexibility affects us all. People need to be flexible at every stage of their lives and structures also need to be flexible. It is, however, important for people to be able to plan things. The main questions are thus: who is allowed to define flexibility and in which structures is flexibilisation taking place. This is precisely the point at which both companies and politics have a role to play. Flexibilisation should be a win-win situation for both sides, for employers and for employees.

- How can we make sure that platform workers have the same rights as non-platform workers regarding holidays, sick leave etc.?

Ursula Huws sees a need to reformulate a set of basic rights that apply to all workers. Not just the "old" rights concerning sick leave, unemployment benefits and the minimum wage, but also "new" rights, for example, the right to challenge unfair customer ratings or the right to data protection on online platforms. There are also new rights that need to be formulated. The more universal they are, the more likely they are to be applied and ensure fair conditions enabling a level playing field, for workers and employers alike.

- How can the financing of social protection systems still be ensured, and could you share some concrete examples of alternative or innovative funding models?

Christian Bodewig states that we are moving towards a system in which the state uses general revenue to provide more financing. We see this in some of the emerging countries where social protection is being rethought and redeveloped. China, for instance, is introducing a rural pension scheme where general revenue resources are used to subsidise enrolment. When you realise that the old system no longer matches current requirements, it is necessary to analyse the reasons and make adaptations to the system.

- Manuela Vollmann – What are in your opinion potential solutions for gender inequalities linked to digitalisation and to what extent is gender inequality already taken into account in your professional field?

Manuela Vollmann answers that the gender topic in labour market politics became a major issue when Austria joined the EU back in 1995 and it has remained on the agenda ever since. Substantial efforts have thus been undertaken to address and counter gender inequalities. Today, we are, however, faced with the question of how

we are to tackle digitalisation and digital change ensuring gender equality and thus offering women and men the opportunity to earn their own income, care for their children etc. This is not just a women's topic, it is a gender topic, which involves all sexes. Digitalisation needs men and women as creators of an inclusive digitalisation. Europe is strong enough to address these issues properly and will cooperate with men and women to take these topics forward.

- The right to disconnect came into force in 2016 in order to protect workers against potential health risks, but when thinking about telework or ICT-based mobile work, how is it possible to ensure that mobile workers can make use of this right?

Jon Messenger takes up the question and highlights that internationally, this right has in fact only been introduced by very few countries. France was the first to implement it, in Germany there are some companies that facilitate this type of employee protection, for instance by shutting down their servers so that employees cannot read emails at night and at the weekend. But quite generally speaking, the right to disconnect does not exist. Thus, we are called upon to identify ways and means that enable the maximisation of the positive aspects of telework and ICT-based mobile work while minimising the negative aspects. The necessary steps would include making sure that people have the right to disconnect. We also need limits on working hours because constant connectivity is obviously dangerous. There is a significant amount of literature that shows that excessive working hours have negative impacts on people's health, safety, work-life balance and also on productivity and individual performance. After having suffered a burnout your performance drops to zero. So it is necessary to introduce such limits, irrespective of how they are established – and these limits have to be observed as regards the daily hours and weekly hours worked. We need to ensure that there are times when people are disconnected. Because if such protection mechanisms are not introduced or observed, pressure will build up, people will become increasingly exhausted until they suffer a burnout or even die due to overwork or job-related exhaustion. It is thus essential that such limits be established. There are different approaches towards reaching this goal: ideally, we would have frameworks both at international and national level. What is also required in this context is "individual boundary management", which means workers need to be able to push the off-button on their devices and disconnect. Because, irrespective of whether the right to disconnect has been implemented or not, as long as their devices remain on, people remain potentially connected. Thus, workers have to empower themselves to use that powerful little button on the side of their mobile phones.

- Ursula Huws – Being available 24/7 is currently a necessity for platform workers. It is, however, necessary to define limits to this around the clock availability. Which mechanisms for tracking and recording time, working time and number of hours worked can be used in this respect? And are there already some good practice examples to be shared?

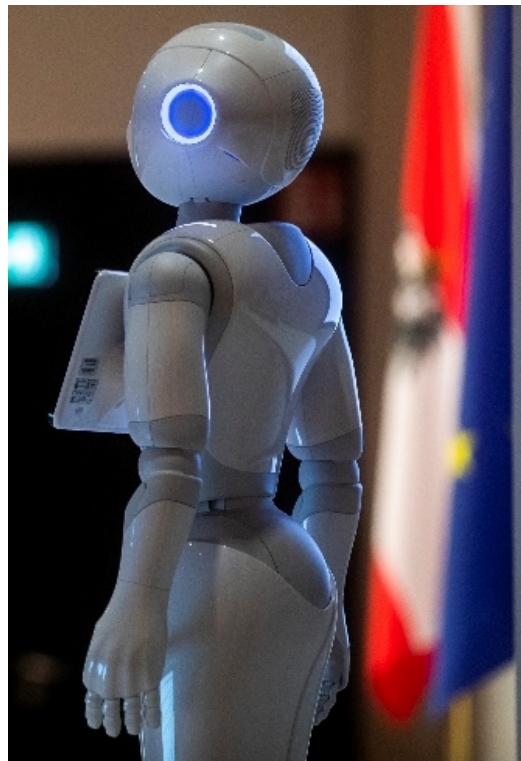
To **Ursula Huws** this is fundamentally related to the power relationship between employer and worker. Flexibility is always an ambiguous concept. What is flexible for the more powerful partner in the relationship means by its very definition that there is a lack of flexibility for the less powerful partner. Any worker who is afraid of not having an income next week is a worker who would not dare to use the off button. This raises very fundamental questions about how workers are to be represented and protected, which brings in social dialogue and especially trade unions. If workers do not have that kind of representation and no protection whatsoever, they will not have the social power to stand up and say no. There are, however, examples of very good practice, which were almost without exception negotiated by social partners or internal employer-employee bargaining bodies.

Entertainment during the breaks

“Raum-Spiel” and dance performance presented by Oliver Schürer

Vienna University of Technology (TU)

We are the first generation that will have to live and work with very complex machines characterised by one very distinctive feature – they look like us, like humans. These machines are also characterised by a high degree of autonomy. This is a fact that we humans need to cope with, socially, culturally and of course individually. We will live alongside robots that are not (only) functional, but are regarded as companions, as something that entertains us. Against this background the TU has launched the transdisciplinary research project H.A.U.S.² which focuses on the following research questions: How could such complex technical systems like robots, especially those equipped with AI, be developed to adapt to our culture? And, conversely: How could we shape the way we feel when dealing with this kind of technology? In the breaks, participants had the opportunity to explore these

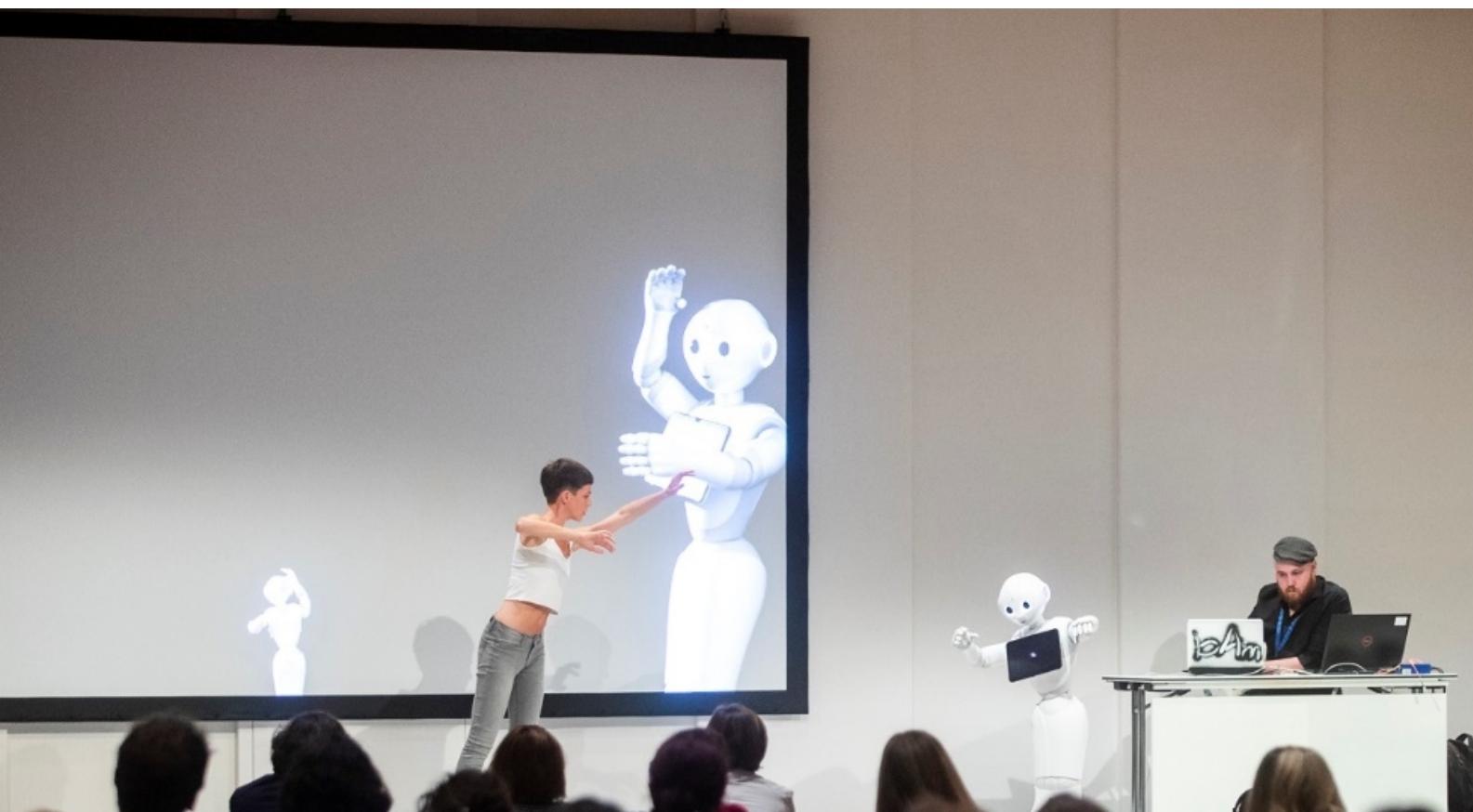


questions in practice by interacting with the humanoid robot, “Pepper” (from Softbank Robotics).



² <https://h-a-u-s.org>

In future, humans and robots will live and work together very closely. In the afternoon session, the audience was thus invited to watch a performance by a human dancer, Eva Maria Kraft, and a humanoid robot. The dancer and the robot moved interactively, expressing proximity in the double sense of space and quality of the relationship, triggering unconscious emotions. Although we all know very well that robots are machines, we sometimes find it hard to control our emotions and behaviour patterns. During the performance, the audience was invited to observe the effect it had on them at a rational and at an emotional level.



Session 2 – Organising Work and Employment Relationships in the Platform Economy

Platform workers in Europe by Annarosa Pesole

Researcher, Joint Research Centre of the European Commission

“The majority of platform workers perform professional services, which suggests that platform workers are actually highly skilled and educated workers.”



Brief summary

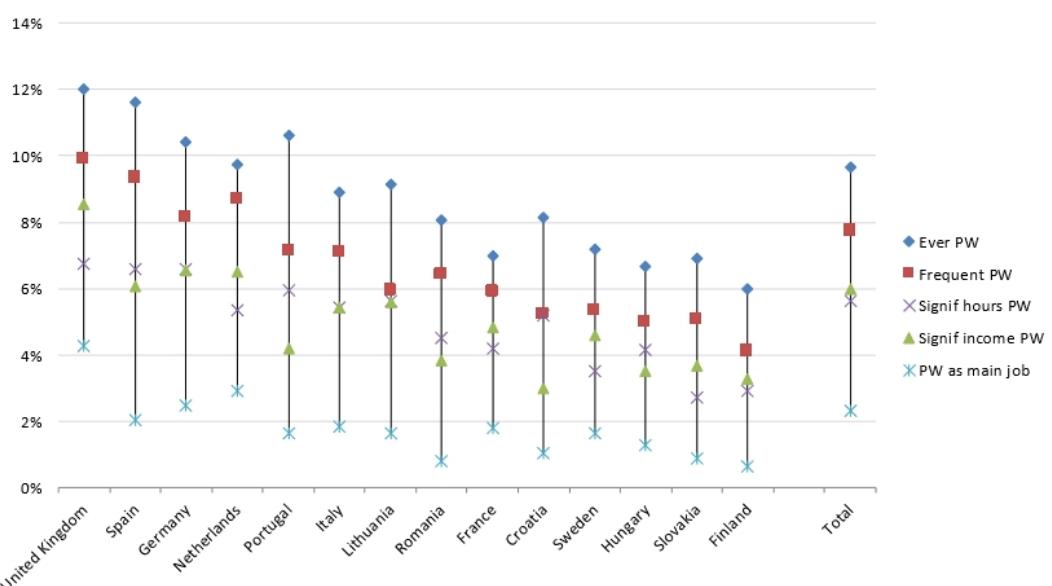
Annarosa Pesole presents the findings of the COLLEEM survey, which sought to quantify platform work in Europe and identify typical features characterising persons working on those platforms. Based on the sample, estimates indicate that 10 % of Europeans have done platform work at least once, often platform work is used to generate additional income, and many platform workers have family responsibilities. The study also focused on gender and the types of services performed by women and men (gender bias).

Presentation

The COLLEEM Survey was a joint project by the Joint Research Centre of the European Commission and DG EMPL. The survey was conducted in July 2017 by

PPMI, a Lithuanian think-tank. It covered 14 Member States with around 2,300 samples by country, which adds up to a final sample of just over 32,000. The aim of the questionnaire was first to quantify platform work, answering the very basic question of how much platform work there is in the EU. The second goal was to better understand the characteristics in terms of both profiling platform workers according to age, gender, employment status, and income, and also with respect to the nature of their work. What kind of work is provided via platforms? What kind of skills do platform workers have, what level of education? The pilot survey provided a large amount of relevant information. After having introduced some improvements, we are currently in the middle of the second wave of the survey.

Based on the findings from the first wave, on average 10 % of respondents across the surveyed countries have performed platform work at least once in their life. However, this figure decreases if frequency, number of hours worked on platform and share of income generated through platform work are taken into account. This is also reflected in the following graph:



The graph shows that in the EU Member States covered by the survey, only between 0.5 and 4 % of the workers perform platform work as their main job (i.e. platform workers who earn 50 % or more of their income via platforms and/or work via platforms more than 20 hours a week). The EU average ranges at 2 %. Frequent platform work is performed by 4 to 10 % of the workers, the EU average stands at 8 %. Approximately 3.5 to 8.5 % of the workforce generate a significant share of their income through platform work, the EU average amounts to 6 %. The incidence of platform work is most frequent in the UK, followed by Spain, and least frequent in Slovakia and Finland.

The next question of interest related to the people who do platform work. What are the main characteristics of platform workers? The survey came to the conclusion that the majority of platform workers are young and male. An interesting finding was that many of them are adults with family responsibilities, rather than being teenagers who do platform work to earn some pocket money. This is important in terms of the motivation for platform work and also in relation to the topic of the working poor. With regard to the employment status in the sample, the study found that 75 % of platform workers stated that they were either employed or self-employed (25 % ticked "other").

The second part of the survey analysed the kind of services provided and coordinated via platforms. In the questionnaire there were 11 categories and respondents could choose several options. According to the level of skills required, they were clustered into three groups: professional level services (high skills), non-professional (medium skills, such as data entry), and on-location services (low skills). The majority of platform workers perform professional services, which suggests that platform workers are actually highly skilled and educated workers. Gender also plays a role with respect to the different task categories: in general, men do more on-location services, which do not require a high skill level. Software tasks are, however, male-dominated. Other on-location tasks such as cleaning, beauty services and housekeeping are mainly performed by women. Tasks with a higher female presence also include translation services.

For more information, please visit the [website of the Publications Office of the European Union](#).

Digital age: Employment and working conditions of selected types of platform work by Irene Mandl

Head of Employment Unit, European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions

"Flexibility, autonomy and control are often highlighted as the main advantages of platform work, claiming that workers are given the possibility to choose and to decide what they want to do. This is true both for worker-initiated and for content-based work but much less so for the platform-determined type."



Brief summary

In her speech, Irene Mandl discusses the findings of a study³ on the working conditions of platform workers. She focuses on three types of work: on-location platform-determined routine work⁴, on-location worker-initiated moderately skilled work⁵ and online contestant specialist work⁶. The study shows that there are major differences between these three types, relating especially to flexibility, earnings,

³ <https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/publications/report/2018/employment-and-working-conditions-of-selected-types-of-platform-work>

⁴ <https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/data/platform-economy/typology/on-location-platform-determined-routine-work>

⁵ <https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/data/platform-economy/typology/on-location-worker-initiated-moderately-skilled-work>

⁶ <https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/data/platform-economy/typology/online-contestant-specialist-work>

workers' representation etc. These findings again highlight the need to take this diversity into account when developing platform work related policies.

Presentation

The reason for compiling this study was that Eurofound has monitored platform work or crowd employment for about five years, focusing in the beginning mainly on online, routine and very small tasks. But platform work is developing rapidly and the scope of activities performed is also increasing substantially. Platform work as an employment form generally emerges in a specific market in specific countries. It generally tends to start off with the delivery of online tasks. When it becomes more established it tends to broaden and include services that are delivered on-location. This form of employment has an impact on the working conditions of the affected workers but also affects general labour market developments.

In the context of the study, a typology of platform work was developed. Ten types were identified that form a somewhat critical mass in Europe in terms of the number of platforms and workers active on these platforms. This typology is based on the skill level required to perform these tasks (low, medium, high), the format of service provisions (locally or online), the scale of tasks (micro, larger), the selection process (who will be assigned a specific task, decision made by the platform, client or worker) and the matching process (contest or tender). Out of 120 possible types ten were selected, which cover approximately 75 % of the platforms that are active in Europe and some 98 % of platform workers. Out of these ten types, three types of platform work that are most distinct in terms of their characteristics and thus the assumed effects on employment and working conditions and with regard to the labour market were chosen. The three types selected were: on-location platform-determined routine work, on-location worker-initiated moderately skilled work and online contestant specialist work.

On-location platform-determined routine work covers comparatively small tasks, which do not require a very high skill level and are delivered physically by a person for a client who is also physically on site. The task is often assigned through an algorithm and most of the workers are young, highly educated males, which means that they tend to be overqualified for the tasks they are assigned to. They do platform work because it gives them access to the labour market and enables them to earn an additional income. Many of these workers also have another job or are students who are doing platform work alongside their studies.

On-location worker-initiated moderately skilled work covers low to medium skilled work. While the service is still delivered locally in person, it is no longer the platform that assigns the job. The workers make available their CV and their skills to the platform. When a client offers a task, the workers may decide if they wish to accept the task or not. In many cases the workers are professionals, for example self-employed individuals who use the platform to expand their client base. They appreciate the ability to choose their own assignments. This type of work includes mostly domestic tasks, crafts or cleaning services in households.

Online contestant specialist work is high-skilled work and in many cases involves bigger assignments, which are delivered online. This type of work is based on a contest. The process starts with a client who offers a task, for example a logo to be designed. Workers complete this task before they even know whether they will be assigned to this task and paid for it, as only the winner(s) of the contest will receive payment for their work. These tasks are again mainly performed by male workers who are highly skilled. But in this case, the workers' skills match the work they perform, which is much better than in type one. People who perform this type of platform work often have another job: some are employees, others are self-employed or freelancers. Online contestant specialist work is frequently performed in creative sectors. Workers' reasons for accepting these tasks are similar to those mentioned by the other two types, i.e. build up a client base, get into self-employment or build up a personal track record in this line of work.

In the next step, the three types of platform work were compared with respect to working conditions. The first aspects mentioned in this context are always flexibility, autonomy and control, which are often highlighted as the main advantages of platform work, claiming that workers are given the possibility to choose and to decide what they want to do. This is true both for worker-initiated and for content-based work but much less so for the platform-determined type. Here, the workers have comparatively limited flexibility to choose, in many cases they sign in for a specific work schedule, which may then be taken as a basis for assigning them to tasks. It is always possible for them to decline a task, but if they reject too often, they might be sanctioned and never be assigned any tasks.

Earnings, incomes and wages of platform workers were the second aspect analysed in the context of this comparison between platform types. In related discussions it is often stressed that remuneration is not very decent as it is very low and unpredictable. Here again, there are differences between the various forms of platform work. In the platform-determined type, incomes are quite low but nevertheless often quite decent, since they are at market price levels. Furthermore, this type of task assignment is scheduled and thus rather predictable. Contestants have the opportunity to earn more, but predictability is very low. It all boils down to a very big competition with a virtual cloud of contestants.

For all three types, concerns were raised with respect to work intensity and working time quality – but for completely different reasons. The platform-determined type might have long working hours and unsocial working schedules. There are more taxi rides or food deliveries in the evenings and at weekends, as there is more demand from clients for these services at these times. The worker-initiated type strongly depends on what the client needs, and the service must be provided as and when the client demands it. The level of flexibility is comparatively high among those who do contest-type work, i.e. when to do the work. Sometimes, however, deadlines are very tight, even tighter than in many other traditional creative industries, which translates into a very high work intensity.

In addition, there are differences with regard to health and safety, notably as regards locally delivered services. These tasks can be physically demanding and have a significant accident potential. This type of work is mainly done by young people who might not have sufficient information on health and safety procedures or the necessary equipment. This increases their potential risks. With regard to online-delivered tasks, workers struggle with the usual computer work related and ergonomics problems, which do not really differ from those in the traditional economy.

With respect to social aspects, workers engaged in all three types of platform work consider themselves to be rather happy and are quite satisfied with their work-life balance because what they choose suits their specific individual situation, their particular phase in life or in their working career. What is similar in all three types is limited – and often total lack of – contacts on the platform. As for the worker-initiated type, workers of course have contact with their clients. Contestant-based work is, in contrast, very isolated since it is performed exclusively online. Due to the global nature of the cloud, they might never meet any other co-workers. In contrast, those who do locally delivered platform-determined work have a good chance of meeting their co-workers, which means that there is potential for community building. They may meet at their hubs or garages and might even wear the same uniform and thus recognise one another.

Regarding labour market access, entry barriers are low for all types of platform work, which means that it may, for instance, be seen as a good opportunity by young people at the beginning of their professional life. Although this might in general be positive, there is always the risk that people might “get stuck” on platforms instead of using them as stepping stones. Not a single worker active in any of the three forms of platform work consider this type of work to be a proper career path, albeit for different reasons: those who do platform-determined work state that this is due to the low-skill tasks involved, they use it as a temporary solution to earn an additional income and they do not want to stay forever. Those who do worker-initiated and contest-based work are typically self-employed or freelancers. They use the platform strategically to either try out self-employment or to build up a reputation in their field of work. In the longer-term, the experience they have gained doing platform work will improve their employability. With regard to representation, apart from trade unions, a number of initiatives have developed. Either workers organise themselves or cooperatives try to mobilise and organise them. Again, there are differences between the three forms. Workers on worker-initiated platforms usually also have their other, more important job. As they are organised through their more important job, they do not see a need for being represented by a specific trade union or any other organisation. Nevertheless, activities have already been launched in quite a number of countries. Trade unions are becoming very active. For two reasons this is strongly linked to the local platform-determined type; firstly work is done locally; and secondly, it is done physically, which makes these workers a more traditional clientele of trade unions.

For more information about platform work, please visit the [Eurofound website](#).

A lost voice: Platform workers' responses to labour platforms under different regulatory structures by Jovana Karanovic

VU Amsterdam

"Policy makers should be encouraged and motivated by these findings and therefore consider involving platform workers in the process of creating regulatory environments and policies – because workers really are at the forefront of value creation."



Brief summary

Jovana Karanovic presents a study which investigates the influence of different regulatory regimes on the way platforms operate by analysing data collected in a forum for Uber drivers. She distinguishes between direct and indirect regulatory regimes, depending on whether regulation applicable to, for instance, Uber drivers is left to the company or is directly undertaken by policy makers. In a nutshell, the study found that direct regulatory regimes produce happier drivers. The message shared by this study is that policy making has an actual, measurable effect on platform workers.

Presentation

Platform economy organisations such as Uber, Deliveroo and Upwork are a quite recent phenomenon and have penetrated the market very quickly. Some of these businesses are even valued higher than companies that have existed for hundred years. At a valuation of 68 billion dollars Uber, which was founded in 2009, has surpassed General Motors, which has been in business since 1908. This does, however, not mean that Uber performs better financially than General Motors. It is solely attributable to the fact that different things count in this new economy, such as a platform's ability to connect those who need services with those who offer such services very effectively. Platforms have developed incredible ways and means of tapping into the skills of communities and therefore are able to prosper by exploiting network effects, meaning the more users there are on one side of the platform, the more attractive the platform is for users on the other side and vice versa. Yet, despite

this apparent success, platforms have been heavily criticised for their practices and workers all over the globe have indeed protested against unfair working conditions.

The relationship between social environment and regulatory systems governing the platform organisations is a dynamic one. Social environment and regulations have an impact on organisations. They do not only set boundaries which determine whether the organisation may operate on the market or not, but they also restrict or give access to key resources organisations might require in order to be able to operate. Therefore, organisations act strategically and seek to use their social environment to their advantage. Thus platform organisations, for instance, act differently in different regulatory systems. The approach used by Uber in the UK differs from that used in Egypt, for instance. In the UK institutions are quite strong, so Uber has used more aggressive strategies to try and change the regulations. Egypt, on the other hand, had quite a serious problem with sexual harassment of women by taxi drivers. Uber was able to solve this societal problem by tagging drivers who misbehaved on its app. This enabled Uber to enter the Egyptian market. The way in which organisations respond to their respective regulatory environment very much affects platform workers, who are key stakeholders in the platform economy. Platform organisations are not capital-intensive. It is common knowledge that Uber, which is the largest taxi-company in the world, does not own a single taxi. These companies grow and prosper by simply facilitating interaction among individuals. With respect to value creation, workers are, however, not the companies' main focus, and therefore it is necessary to take their perspective into account.

Obviously, there are both pros and cons: platform work differs in many respects from what other employees face on the labour market. One of the advantages of platform work is that workers, since they are not legally obliged by a contract, can leave the labour market whenever they wish. This flexibility is especially valued by millennials who want to work anytime, anywhere, choosing when they want to work in order to have a better work-life balance. Platforms also provide easy access to the labour market, which can be very positive for people who are between jobs. Many consider the practice of immediate payment for platform work an advantage.

Yet, there are also many disadvantages. There are, for instance, no employment benefits in the traditional sense, which basically means that the risk has been shifted to workers who now neither have insurance nor holiday pay or any other benefits usually related to employment. Furthermore, there are significant information asymmetries. The platform holds a lot of power and information which is not available to workers. Uber, for instance, does not release the destination of a potential customer to the driver until he or she accepts the task, therefore drivers are not able to decide for themselves whether a task or ride will be profitable.

The main question analysed by the study is: how do workers' responses to new organisational forms in the platform economy vary depending on different regulatory structures. Uber, as the best-known example of a platform organisation and pioneer in this field, has fought numerous regulatory battles. Hence, it was chosen as the focus of the research. The data was collected via UberPeople.NET, the biggest

forum for drivers. It is used by Uber drivers to share information and advice, but also to reveal information about their income, for instance. All data was collected in this forum, all in all 120,000 posts by Uber drivers talking about Uber. The method applied was structural topic modelling, a quantitative technique for analysing big text data. Companies use this method to find out what consumers say about them on Twitter. By applying this method one may, for example, identify the 30 most common topics addressed in this data, i.e. what drivers talk about the most.

The most common types of postings are by drivers who oppose Uber's organisational policies, such as the way in which tasks are assigned to them, how Uber rewards them via the rating system, or how Uber communicates with them. Another issue addressed very frequently is lack of income security. Drivers are dissatisfied with ratings and compensation. They also complain about misallocation of rides, which means a lot of waiting time and a lot of cancellations. On the other hand, collective action is a popular topic. Drivers have organised physical meetings, trying to improve Uber's organisational solutions, exchanging very practical information on topics such as insurance, traffic information, licences etc., and seek advice from each other. Uber provides information to drivers about insurance and traffic as well, but workers ignore this information and seek their own solutions. Another topic is self-organisation of tasks; for instance, drivers tell each other where there are events with a lot of potential customers.

The responses vary depending on the respective regulatory structure. Data was collected in 12 cities in the US and in London and subdivided into data about direct and about indirect regulatory structures. Direct regulatory structures refer to regulators that regulate transport nets for companies like Uber, drivers and vehicles. Indirect regulatory structures are structures where regulators only regulate the transport network companies which, in turn, have the power to regulate drivers and vehicles. There are vast differences in workers' responses to the platform organisation, depending on whether they are in a direct or indirect regulatory environment. In direct regulatory environments, which generally involve cities with stronger regulations, like London and New York, workers tend to complement Uber's organising solutions much more. There is also a lot of collaboration among workers, they meet in physical locations and offer each other advice. They also provide information on practical matters that may be useful for drivers, and really try to work with Uber. However, in indirect regulatory structures with weaker regulations, such as in Los Angeles, San Francisco or Dallas, for example, there is much more opposition and resistance. Drivers complain much more about earnings and the rating systems. There is more dissatisfaction but drivers also tend to organise themselves more and ignore Uber's solutions in favour of proposing alternatives of their own.

In conclusion, the study shows that workers are not mere receivers and performers of tasks assigned to them by the company. They do indeed react pro-actively, they debate and disregard organisational solutions predefined by companies. Workers' responses differ with regard to the type of regulatory structures (directly or indirectly regulated). In direct structures, the workers are much more collaborative, they work

with each other and they also work with Uber. As for indirect regulatory structures, there is much more resistance and insecurity with regard to wages, but also more self-organising. The possible explanation for this phenomenon may be an imbalance of power. Under direct regulatory structures, regulators have a lot of power. Thus, Uber has less power, which, in turn, gives more power to the drivers. Under indirect regulatory structures, Uber has more power to regulate drivers and vehicles and will obviously lower the entry barriers because its business model works better when a huge pool of workers can join the platform. Workers might be more dissatisfied simply because they have less power in these indirect regulatory structures. Another explanation could be the boundaries to entering the market. Regulators in the stronger regulated cities restrict market entry. Those workers who successfully enter the market are more satisfied because competition is lower. Under indirect regulatory structures, there is much more competition among workers who struggle to make a living. Information asymmetries can be observed in both structures. Policy makers should be encouraged and motivated by these findings and therefore consider involving platform workers in the process of creating regulatory environments and policies – because workers really are at the forefront of value creation.

CrowdLearn – Skills formation and skills matching in online platform work: Practices and policies for promoting crowdworkers' continuous learning by Konstantinos Pouliakas

Expert in the Department for Skills and Labour Market, European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training

"Platform owners think they are not really responsible for platform workers' skill development. Generally speaking, there is little interest and perceived business need in investing in skill development activities, even though there certainly are some platforms that do take this more seriously."



Brief summary

Konstantinos Pouliakas presents the initial results of a study on the learning and skills-developing behaviour of crowd workers and their skills matching practices. Findings suggest that the responsibility for acquiring qualifications and further education/training and learning is often left to the workers themselves, who obtain those qualifications primarily via on-the-job learning. Furthermore, formal education is not the only qualification that counts on platforms as skills can also be validated through reputation scores, which can be biased as a result of discrimination. Policy makers should support platform workers by offering relevant education programmes that contribute towards developing their self-regulatory

learning skills as well as soft skills, such as self-efficacy, self-marketing or boundary/time management, which are very important for platform workers.

Presentation

Currently, CEDEFOP is conducting the Crowd Learn study in cooperation with the University of Oxford, the Oxford Internet Institute and the University of West London. The full name of the study is "Skills Formation and Skills Matching in Online Platform Work: Practices and Policies for Promoting Crowdworkers' Continuous Learning". The study aims to answer the following questions: What are the types of skills and knowledge that platform workers acquire through their online employment in platform-mediated transactions? Why do they learn or why do they adopt particular learning strategies? How are the tasks that they engage with enabling them to acquire these skills? How are the skills that they acquire compatible (or not) with their

own professional aspirations regarding career development? What are the workplace learning practices that they are adopting? With whom do platform workers learn?

Essentially, the question is whether platform work is conducive to developing workers' skills or if platform work rather facilitates deskilling. On the one hand, platforms are often considered digital sweat shops where workers engage in very routine manual tasks, which is certainly not conducive to developing skills. On the other hand, it is argued that platform workers engage in professional activities, that they are highly educated people and therefore this environment should indeed rather facilitate learning. Policy makers should thus try to ensure a certain level of quality with respect to the further training of platform workers and their learning environment. This will, however, be difficult to achieve since most learning in these contexts is informal, self-directed and self-initiated.

The issue of reputation scores on platforms, which are considered proxies of people's skills, is a highly relevant one. In a perfect market world, these scores would mirror the skills acquired and signalled by people's qualifications. In practice, however, such scores may be poor proxies of people's skills as they tend to reproduce discrimination. Also, workers who are engaged on one platform, and acquire a good reputation score for the tasks they accomplish or the services they provide, cannot easily transfer these reputation scores to another platform. With respect to the potential goal of more fluid labour markets, in which labour market transitions are made easier for workers, this constitutes a barrier and therefore ensuring the transparency and portability of platform workers' informal skills is a key issue for policy making.

Professor Anoush Margaryan from the University of West London, who co-leads this study, has very recently conducted a study that focuses on the differences between the learning practices of workers who perform online freelance work (for instance platform workers using Upwork) versus workers who perform micro-working, the type of work you would associate with very low-skilled routine work, such as on Crowdflower. This study was conducted using a sample of 295 platform workers but the relevant findings will be further developed and expanded based on a survey involving some 1,000 platform workers to be conducted as part of the CrowdLearn study. According to Margaryan's study, those who presume that performing platform work and in particular microwork is linked to a deskilling process are wrong. Her results show that all types of platform workers, even those who perform microwork, are engaged in a lot of self-initiated and self-regulated learning and learning activities. Over 40 % perform new tasks on a daily basis. Around 50 % of respondents in her sample state that they try to do online courses. They thus consciously and continuously seek to improve their skills.

The CrowdLearn study is in principle based on a five step process that covers the period between 2018 and early 2020. Following a comprehensive literature review, a qualitative analysis involving interviews with approximately 80 crowd workers and 30 stakeholders has been completed only recently. The stakeholders include

platform owners, platform clients and trade unions. Providers of vocational education and training, online learning platforms, and of course social partners were also interviewed.

Once the interim phase has been completed, an online survey will be conducted in four online labour platforms (Upwork, Twago, Fiverr, and PeoplePerHour). The focus will be placed on collecting additional background information about the learning practices of crowd workers, finding out whether or not platform workers have acquired skills through their crowdwork and if they have gaps in terms of the skills required, and if so, if these gaps potentially prevent them from meeting their career aspirations. The logic behind selecting these platforms is basically that they cover a wide range of tasks and skills typically required of crowdworkers. Some platforms, such as Upwork, tend to offer a higher-skilled type of work, associated with professional activities. A focus was placed on including European-based platforms, like Twago, in the study.

This analysis process is then followed by the final project stage at the end of 2019/in early 2020, under which the best suitable vocational education training and life-long learning policies for online crowdworkers will be discussed.

Initial findings produced by the study show that platform owners hold the view that they are not really responsible for platform workers' skills development. Generally speaking, there is little interest in investing in skills development activities (which is also not perceived as a business case), even though there certainly are some platforms that provide some support with skills development. The main argument is that there are enough skills available online among potential platform workers, so stakeholders can find the skills they need without having to invest into specific workers' skills development.

Nevertheless, some platforms, such as Upwork for instance, use machine learning and AI techniques to try to develop skills taxonomies in order to anticipate the main types of skills needed in the future. An important conclusion with regard to education and training is that platform owners themselves recognise that in this dynamic market it is indeed very difficult to acquire the necessary education and training that would enable ongoing updating of the specific types of skills that might be needed by the platform economy. Platform owners also recognise and acknowledge that this market is a freelance market and that one should expect that the skills, competences and reputation scores of workers would facilitate a market-based system.

Nevertheless, they do acknowledge that the freelance market is largely dominated by power structures and discriminatory practices. It is very difficult for workers to engage and to be assigned gigs or tasks if they do not have a baseline reputation score or clear and good credentials and qualifications that attract platform work. As regards crowd workers, many have doubts as to whether or not platforms are the right place to turn to when seeking to acquire training and develop their skills. Crowd workers themselves express scepticism about the nature of the tasks offered on the

platforms – that they are either too simple or too specific. Some even stated that they are not relevant with respect to the skills they require.

This suggests that crowd workers do not really think that platforms should be the main driver that facilitates ongoing skills development, although they can do so indirectly, for instance through workflow/task design, interface design, inclusion of learning support toolkits (e.g. portable portfolios, tools to articulate and share learning goals with other workers, networking tools).

Another question to be addressed is if workers themselves feel that they have the necessary skills to adequately perform their platform work. In fact, many acknowledge that in some cases they do not really have the skills required to carry out projects, meaning that a lot of their skill development is based on hands-on or ad hoc learning by doing. Sometimes they take advantage of their platform clients' "ignorance" as they are often not clear about the type of task to be performed. Thus, in a way, workers sometimes oversell their skills and then learn by doing. Regarding the question of how to facilitate ongoing learning, platform workers unanimously state that speed is crucial. In their view, typical adult learning activities are far too slow. They favour very short and concise courses that enable them to quickly develop new skills, and they often prefer online learning resources as opposed to formal training courses. **Every minute a worker spends learning is time not spent earning.**

When it comes to the skills required, a key output generated by the CrowdLearn study is that it enables a new taxonomy of the most frequent skills developed prior to and through online platform work. In addition to the usual technical skills required or acquired by platform workers (e.g. digital literacy), a very good command of English and good communication skills prove essential. There is an increasing need for soft skills, which may determine an individual's success in platform work. Workers acknowledge that 'platform etiquette' is a must. They require a very good understanding of the platform they work for and the respective norms. In addition to that, workers require an understanding of their own professional networks, which they have to improve, develop and foster. It may be very challenging for the individual platform worker to develop and build their personal brand. This often constitutes a major burden as they need to understand how to navigate, acquire and further develop the necessary skills, foster their own self-efficacy, set their own strategic goals and be able to monitor and evaluate their own learning activities. The skills required by platform workers also include the ability to interact via machines, such as a computer, as pricing work and performance assessment are increasingly based on algorithms, which is fundamentally different from what you would experience in standard organisations where learning and feedback are based on interaction with supervisors or colleagues.

Such skills are generally not part of the typical skills set acquired through regular vocational education and training in EU countries, nor do they currently form part of the respective education strategies – although developing workers' digital competences has become a focus of attention in recent years. In the context of the key competence framework for life-long learning a major emphasis has been placed

on fostering an entrepreneurial mindset. Yet, European education and training systems need to be adapted to meet current requirements, which includes investing in fostering self-sustaining, self-determined individuals who – if they want to engage in platform work – are able to manage their learning and career paths themselves.

For further information, please visit the website of the Oxford Internet Institute website of the Oxford Internet Institute or the website of CEDEFOP.

Discussion

- Are there innovative models for self-organisation of platform workers and platform owners, for example through cooperatives?

Jovana Karanovic answers that platform cooperatives are platforms that are owned and governed by users, workers or both. Currently, there are more than 50 such platform cooperatives in place around the world, but unfortunately they are not very successful. They are not able to compete with platforms such as Uber or AirBnb, whose financial power enables them to develop a critical user base. What can, however, be done at the policy level is to support platforms that provide structures for platform cooperatives. An increasing number of platforms that provide software to be used by cooperatives is, for instance, being established. Thus it is not necessary for cooperatives to reinvent the wheel. What is, however, necessary in this context is to promote the development of infrastructure that enables cooperatives to grow.

- Irene Mandl – The classification of platforms presented is very helpful. But how can it be ensured that the classification is also applicable to new online platforms?

Irene Mandl answers that in the related literature review⁷ a total of 27 different elements were identified which can theoretically be combined in 39 million different ways – just to get an idea of the scope of future developments that could thus be analysed. The five classification elements presented were selected because they were considered the most important ones and based on the data available, it was possible to validate that they constitute a critical mass of cases. This theoretical classification certainly creates room for addressing potential future trends.

⁷ <http://eurofound.link/platformeconomy>





Round Table Session 2: Organising employment relationships in the platform economy:

Rebekah Smith, Adele Siegl, Matthias Niebuhr, Martin Risak, Peter Scherrer

Rebekah Smith

Deputy Director in the Social Affairs department, BusinessEurope

"The employment status of platform workers is a major topic of discussion at the European level but also in many Member States and there is clearly no one-size-fits-all solution."



Brief summary

Rebekah Smith presents the employers' representatives' point of view on the topic of platform work. In her presentation, she places a special emphasis on three aspects: firstly, the importance of national solutions, since every country has a specific business culture and tradition which has to be taken into account in policy making. Secondly, she warns of overregulation which would hinder new developments in the markets and thirdly, Rebekah Smith stresses the importance of distinguishing between different platforms.

Presentation

BusinessEurope and its member federations firmly believe that the changes in the world of work, the increasing variety in the forms of employment and the increase in transitions between employments can prove beneficial for both employers, workers and jobseekers. It is important to facilitate adaptations to the labour market by providing education and training systems, but changes are also required with respect to the organisation of work. A range of different business models have emerged, be it platform work or the collaborative economy. These changes may open up a large variety of opportunities to persons who are unemployed or wish to enter the labour market. From BusinessEurope's point of view, it is important that both the EU and the national level acknowledge that there are different options and choices for companies and employers with respect to business models, for instance, but that workers and jobseekers also have options and choices they may make.

With respect to labour laws, working conditions or access to social protection, these changes are indeed a challenge, nevertheless it is necessary to put things into perspective. The majority of jobs in our economy are still based on traditional employment contracts. Therefore, policies should focus on accompanying these changes rather than stifling innovation and the development of new business models. Policy approaches need to be flexible enough to reflect the diverse forms of work. Furthermore, we tend to talk about platforms as if they were all alike, but they are indeed based on very different business models. Nevertheless, there is a strong tendency to lump them all together.

The employment status of platform workers is a major topic of discussion at the European level but also in many Member States and there is clearly no one-size-fits-all solution. Overall, the national member federations believe that the current criteria used to distinguish between employees and the self-employed in national regulatory frameworks also suffice to cover these new activities. That said, decisions about defining the employment status of workers should clearly be made at the national level, since national definitions of laws and collective agreements have adapted over time and can continue to adapt. In national laws there are often very precise definitions governing industrial relations systems and the respective national traditions may vary from sector to sector.

New forms of work we are not yet able to imagine might emerge in the next ten to twenty years. Therefore, it is absolutely crucial that these changes be accompanied by flexible and adaptable policy approaches that do not stifle innovation. Worker participation and representation have been identified as one of the key challenges in this respect, but employer or business participation and representation are equally important. The key question in this context is: are the traditional structures still suitable for new forms of employment? But also: is it actually desirable that traditional structures should represent new forms of employment or will new structures emerge? A lot is currently going on in this area and there is much to be considered.

Social partner organisations at all levels need to develop a better understanding and adapt themselves to these new dynamics in order to be able to continue to live up to their mission of collectively representing employers' and workers' interests. It will definitely be possible to develop relevant solutions, which need to be found at the national level so as to ensure respect of the diverse industrial practices. As regards social protection, the Commission recommends that everybody has access to it. But policies aimed at ensuring adequate access to and sustainability of social protection mechanisms need to take account of the different competences of EU and national bodies.

The overall sustainability of social protection systems is very important. The topic of mandatory membership of the self-employed in tax-financed social systems is an issue in this context. The self-employed should be able to choose the type of social protection, the type of insurance, the type of scheme and the type of provider, which leads us to the issue of market-based solutions. There is a lot of talk about access to state-based social protection, but there are also market-based solutions that build

on negotiations with insurance providers active in the market, for instance as regards accident insurance and pensions.

Adele Siegl

Foodora Vienna

"Not all riders have the same employment status. So legally, the works council cannot represent all workers, but only the employees."



Brief summary

Adele Siegl is a member of the works council of Foodora in Vienna. She shares her professional experience and addresses the difficulties associated with negotiating a company agreement in a company like Foodora. She highlights the reasons for these difficulties and points out why she relies on policy makers to create a framework of rules that require the company to be cooperative under a co-determination process.

Presentation

Foodora, which is part of Delivery Hero, is a logistics company with a delivery fleet. Foodora is the only company in the Delivery Hero group that has its own delivery fleet. Other companies that

belong to the Delivery Hero group are Mjam or Foodpanda. Foodora started as a start-up called Volo in Munich in 2014 and was acquired by Delivery Hero in 2015. In the beginning, the company's algorithm was not yet well developed, so it was not so much a crowd work provider but rather a classical bike-messenger service that focused on food delivery. Foodora is represented in twelve countries in and outside of Europe. In Germany and Austria, Foodora has about 4,500 employees, the vast majority are active in Germany where all riders are fully employed. In Austria, only 70 out of 600 riders are employed. Delivery Hero sees itself as a tech company but is also the global market leader in food delivery. It was founded in 2011 as a stock company and became a Societas Europaea in 2018. Delivery Hero has 17,000 employees in over 40 countries.

Foodora has works councils on a Europe-wide or regional level. The first works council was set up in Vienna, soon followed by the one in Cologne, and since June 2018, the Hamburg branch has had a works council. In other countries, there are organised riders who are supported by unions. Special negotiations concerning

workers' representation were held in the lead-up to Delivery Hero becoming a Societas Europea and a works council will be elected next week. Based on these special negotiations, 50 % of the six supervisory board members will be employees.

The Vienna works council seeks to negotiate a company agreement because the company currently uses an app that tracks riders by GPS, collects data and monitors riders. The works council therefore wants clear rules to be defined for the use of this app. Sufficient compensation for bicycle and gear maintenance is another topic on the agenda. Riders do not receive extra pay when working in extreme heat or cold. Riders would, however, like to maintain flexible working times, which are presently at risk since management says that granting all riders employee status means reducing flexibility. However, being granted employee status is an important goal for everyone. They all do the same dangerous job, and would therefore require something like paid sick-leave and paid holidays. The works council is also working on a collective bargaining agreement for bike messengers in cooperation with other bike messenger companies in Austria.

The works council also asks the riders to participate in a survey, which gives them a voice. If they have problems or suggestions for improvement, riders may also send an email to the rider management. During office hours, riders may also come and seek advice. Employees are offered the same options but they are additionally supported by unions, by law and also by the works council. They can elect the local works council, they can elect the Societas Europea works council and they can also have the right to be heard and participate in decision making at the company annual general meetings.

It is very difficult to organise the riders as they hardly ever meet – except at red traffic lights or in restaurants for two minutes. The riders are on the road, but the management is based in an office, which facilitates contact. There are also differences with respect to working times. While management works from nine a.m. to five p.m., riders work from eleven a.m. to eleven p.m. Not all riders have the same employment status. Legally, the works council therefore cannot represent all workers but only the employees. Company agreements do not apply to the dependent freelancers. There is also a high turnover rate among riders, which makes it even more difficult to get riders organised. In fact, many do not care because they do not plan to work for the company for very long anyway. The same holds true for management. Since the works council was founded, management's composition has changed several times. Another problem is lack of transparency in decision-making processes. Headquarters in Berlin always tends to "forget" to inform works councils about developments and events. When it comes to decision making, works council is often informed only after decisions have been made.

Matthias Niebuhr

Head of Legal, MyHammer

"There are several models and the general question is – is there such a thing as a platform? There is a lot of talk about platforms, but what are they like? As yet, it has not been possible to find a helpful definition."



Brief summary

Matthias Niebuhr presents the platform MyHammer, which he defines as an online market place for services. He describes the development MyHammer has undergone since its beginnings as an organisation that actually fostered price dumping into an organisation that, out of economic rationale, left such practices behind. The example he gave could serve as an inspiration for all other digital market places or platforms.

Presentation

MyHammer is a digital market place that offers professional home services. The company basically provides any service that is related to the home – from moving to plumbing. Every month, some 60,000 jobs are posted, the average value per job cannot be accurately determined but for calculation purposes an average value of 1,700 euros is used. The jobs provided range from low-skill tasks such as connecting a stove to the electricity for around 50 euros to roofing jobs that cost several tens of thousands of euros. In total, some 20,000 professionals are registered in Germany. This figure does not sound particularly impressive compared to the huge number of companies that would be addressable. Compared to the general size of the market, MyHammer is indeed rather small.

MyHammer offers a platform for posting jobs. It also offers companies the opportunity to present themselves and communicate with consumers and to generally address the consumer market. This is particularly welcomed by smaller companies that find small-scale jobs more attractive. Payment is generally effected much faster than via construction companies or public authorities. MyHammer started out like Uber, and was considered a nuisance by the sector because they introduced a reverse auction, which led to price dumping. Although pricing is important for consumers, as nobody wants to pay too much, it is only one aspect. Another very relevant aspect is good ratings, which are as important as word-of-mouth recommendations in the real world.

In the beginning, MyHammer, again rather like Uber, ignored local standards. This did, however, not work. So MyHammer started to qualify the jobs that are posted,

thus reflecting adherence to local law provisions. If somebody wants to apply for a plumbing job, they need to be a licenced plumber. The company introduced a number of drastic changes, which have paid off over time. Today MyHammer is much more successful than before and also profitable albeit on a rather small scale. It is a digital market place which neither provides the services itself nor selects a worker or a company for the costumer. It is the customers themselves who choose who they want to come to their home to perform the job or repair something. MyHammer does not determine the pricing nor when the professional arrives at the client's home to do the job. Currently, MyHammer is not involved in invoicing and payment either. So basically, MyHammer can be regarded as an online-dating for services, it brings people together: consumers and service professionals. And it is these two who negotiate the details, MyHammer does not interfere. The platform's revenue is basically generated by monthly membership fees. MyHammer has evolved to some extent into a marketing channel for service professionals.

A study conducted by the German Ministry of Labour classified MyHammer as a digital market place. There are several models and the general question is – is there such a thing as a platform? There is a lot of talk about platforms, but what are they like? As yet, it has not been possible to find a helpful definition.

Martin Risak

Professor at the Department of Labour Law and Law of Social Security at the University of Vienna

"Reputations can be incorrect and discriminatory. Furthermore, reputations also have a lock-in effect. Crowd workers cannot take reputations with them, which restricts their mobility – and platforms use this to lock workers in."



Brief summary

In his speech, Martin Risak stresses the need to take action with respect to platform work. He recommends defining a clear classification that distinguishes between employees and the self-employed in the platform economy and that this be properly implemented. Highlighting the problems with rating systems, he recommends that they become much more transparent. He also suggests creating a possibility for platform workers to challenge unfair ratings and ensuring the portability of ratings.

Presentation

Addressing the problems related to platform work on the regulatory basis requires major efforts. Nevertheless, it is necessary to deal with and manage these issues. New business models are complex and diverse and there is not a one-size-fits-all solution. Yet people nonetheless know intuitively what they are talking about when they talk about platform work.

The underlying basis of any platform work is a triangle of relationships, which is, however, nothing new in the world of work. There is a platform, a service provider and somebody for whom the services are provided. The same principle is, for instance, applicable to temporary employment agencies. Agency work was regulated also due to the complex legal issues involved. In the virtual world, however, it is extremely difficult to see who the contracting partners are and what kind of contracts actually form the basis for providing a service. The OECD points out that the unclear status of the underlying contracts is actually the main issue to be addressed as regards this form of work. Secondly, a common feature shared by all forms of platform work is the reputation system. Reputations can be incorrect and discriminatory. Furthermore, reputations also have a lock-in effect. Crowd workers cannot take reputations with them, which restricts their mobility – and platforms use this to lock workers in.

But these issues can actually be tackled in a very flexible way. And it is high time that we become active and properly address them. First of all, the issue of classification can be solved – not by defining the employment relationship but by making it easier to enforce the employment status of an employee. In this context, it could be useful to base the employee status of platform workers on a legal assumption. It is also important to counter the imbalance of information. The entire information is centred on the platform and for platform workers or policy makers it is nearly impossible to access this information. In order to be able to enforce the status of a worker effectively, it would be useful to have a set of criteria indicating the existence of an employment relationship. If certain criteria are met, the respective platform worker should be treated like an employee and receive the related benefits. This would also have an impact on the applicable law. If the worker is to be treated like an employee it is easy. A connection would be established to the applicable law and the forum of the place where the work is performed. So initially, the topics of applicable law and forum can be dealt with quite easily. Other topics to be addressed are information obligations, equal treatment and qualification of search time.

The regulation of digital reputation (rating) systems is another crucial issue. To begin with, these reputation systems often lack transparency, and platform workers do not know how their reputation ratings are attained and what effects their changes might have. Secondly, it should definitely be possible to correct incorrect ratings. It is necessary to put a relevant procedure in place that enables the correction of unfair ratings. Persons of colour who work for transportation platforms tend to get worse ratings than white-skinned, which is a form of structural discrimination that has to be tackled. Thirdly, there is the issue of portability. Workers should be able to take ratings with them when they change platforms. However, the issue of portability is not new. Mobile phone numbers, for instance, are portable and consumers may take their number with them when they find a better provider. The goal is to make the market work and to make it easier to find the best option available.

All these aspects could be addressed at the European level by a platform work directive – in the same way as the topic of temporary work agencies was successfully dealt with by the Temporary Agency Work Directive in 2008. So, to quote Elvis Presley: A little less conversation, a little more action – please!

For more information, please see Martin Risak's publication "[Fair conditions for platform workers](#)".

Discussion



- What role do social partners play in the platform economy and how can social partners represent the interests of platform workers?

Peter Scherrer, Deputy Secretary General of the European Trade Union Confederation⁸, starts answering the question by explaining that the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) is an umbrella organisation composed of 90 trade unions from all over Europe that represents a total of 43 million workers. The role played by social partners varies depending on the levels at which they are active, i.e. the European level, the national level, the regional level or the company level. One example of social partner involvement at national level is the "Hilfer agreement". In Denmark, Hilfer is a platform for cleaners featuring around 8,000 profiles. The agreement came into effect quite recently and will be valid for one year. This goes to show that social partners are already playing a role at national but also at company level. This topic was also dealt with at a recent conference. As yet, there are, however, not that many examples available, as social partners still play a rather small but increasingly important role.

The social partnership system also plays a very active role at the European level. Negotiations on a European framework agreement on digital work, addressing the right to disconnect, for instance, are expected to start soon. What the European Trade Union Confederation cannot do as an umbrella organisation is to bargain in individual companies. While social partners can define a framework at European level, this is a topic workers' representatives have to take care of. Legislation is necessary, but the social partners could also act more quickly and do more. For this reason, the European Trade Union Confederation calls upon employers'

⁸ Peter Scherrer did not make a presentation but participated in the discussion.

associations to joint forces and use social dialogue and the social partner relationship to be pro-active and achieve more.

- Matthias Niebuhr - If workers have an issue or a problem – for instance because of a change in their schedule or if they have questions regarding their insurance – who could they turn to at MyHammer?

Matthias Niebuhr emphasises that they are not workers but independent contractors. They do not only provide services for customers acquired via MyHammer but also have a number of other job-finding sources. This is why such issues are not on MyHammer's agenda. The platform helps their customers, the professionals, but does not organise anything with respect to the topics mentioned in the question.

- Matthias Niebuhr - What about the algorithm used by management at MyHammer? Do professionals have the opportunity to react to decisions made by the algorithms?

Matthias Niebuhr answers that the use of algorithms in this field is difficult due to the fact that it is not a very standardised area. MyHammer still tries to tackle the complexity of the services that people look for on the platform. One of the challenges is the translation between consumer speak and professional speak. If a professional selects a criterion relating to the kind of jobs he or she wants to do, the jobs displayed are not filtered. If a painter, for instance, is looking for a job in Vienna, he or she will see all jobs for painters in Vienna.

- Adele Siegl - What do you think is the general attitude of companies? Do they see any benefits in having works councils or are works councils predominantly seen as cost factors which may lead to competitive disadvantages?

Adele Siegl answers that Foodora even advertises – and indeed boasts about the fact that they have a works council and that 50 % of the supervisory board members are employees. In terms of cooperation, it is more annoying for the works council. On the Delivery Hero website, it says that they are proud of having a works council and of being a good example. But it is still a struggle to get time off for employee representative work. The company is not really willing to pay for that. It is a cost factor that they are not really willing to accept, but as they are obliged to do so by law, they have to do it.

- Martin Risak - Many experts argue that regulating such a diverse and dynamic area is counterproductive and not useful. It might hinder competition and innovation. How do you answer these critics?

Martin Risak compares the new economy with a beautiful flower garden where there's weed growing. The gardener has to think about ways to get rid of the weed, which in the case of the world of work are business models that are based on precarity, insecurity and price-dumping. There is nothing innovative about precarious working conditions; it is a business model that has been in use for centuries. In the

end it is about separating the good from the bad within a system that is, of course, to some extent biased towards employers because there is a disparity with regard to the distribution of wealth and resources in society. Thus regulation actually means weeding the flower garden of the new economy. One possibility is to wait until those 'bad' companies are pushed out of the market because nobody wants to work for them. However, along the way a lot of platform workers will have worked to their own disadvantage. Regulation is there to protect those who cannot protect themselves. It is about weeding the flower garden and it is not about putting weed killer all over the garden, thereby also killing the flowers. This is of course a tricky exercise but one that has to be performed.

- Martin Risak - As far as you are aware, are there any countries that are seriously considering what you suggest, namely implementing a legal assumption of the employment relationship on platforms?

Martin Risak does not know of an example for platforms but says Belgium has introduced a rebuttable presumption or legal assumption of an employment relationship in sectors that are very prone to bogus self-employment, such as construction, transportation, security services and cleaning services. It is a rather flexible solution because the goal is to never push somebody into an employment relationship. It is only about making it easier for people in precarious employment to enforce the employee status. This is a very smart way of reacting to the massive power and information imbalances in certain sectors.

- Rebekah Smith and Peter Scherrer - Who is actually responsible for providing and safeguarding the effective protection of platform workers in order to minimise the risks arising from this specific form of work organisation?

Rebekah Smith suspects that this question is based on certain assumptions. One of which is that platform workers are faced with more negative working conditions, health risks etc., but there are of course very different types of platform work. In addition, there are many self-employed who are not platform workers. Rather than looking at the status of the worker and assuming what certain statuses may mean, people should look at the actual tasks performed by workers. The question is thus rather how to develop prevention strategies that are linked to the tasks and the jobs performed and not the employment status. It is really problematic to consider platform workers as a cohesive group of workers that need one specific approach. A holistic way would in fact be more appropriate.

Peter Scherrer emphasises the responsibility of those who offer the job or the work to also pay for health and safety measures, which he thinks is really important. Foodora riders, for example, are young and full of energy, they ride around the city for hours and run up to the third floor with a huge stack of pizza boxes, but they will no longer be able to do that when they are 55. Protection is necessary in this sector. And lack of protection and social security in this sector will have an impact on society as a whole. In the end, each and every one of us will have to pay these costs, because when somebody's health is affected, society has to take care of him or her.

This is important – and therefore it is absolutely clear that employers who generate profits thanks to workers have to pay for social protection. These costs cannot just be passed on to society. Making profits at the expense of society is not a proper business model.

Rebekah Smith wants to clarify that it is the clients who pay for the services. This raises the question whether it is the client's job to take care of health and safety. Platform work is not an employer-employee relationship.

Martin Risak likes the discussion because it reflects the complexity of these multi-participant relationships. But in the end, it is about who reaps the rewards of the platform workers' labour. The platforms take the biggest cut. Thus, we do not have to talk about employee-employer relationships as such but rather need to focus on who benefits and how the risks should be allocated. Basically, it is about the allocation of risks and the allocation of profits.

For **Matthias Niebuhr** it is important to differentiate between different business models – MyHammer, for instance, differs from Uber – and that this difference should be reflect in the law.

- Adele Siegl - You listed a number of challenges faced by works councils in the platform economy – is it possible to achieve at least some of the goals pursued by works councils?

Adele Siegl sees no obstacles in her work, just challenges. One of these challenges is that there are different employment models and there is obviously no such thing as a one-size-fits-all model. In collaboration with some of the bike messenger companies in Austria she is currently working on a collective bargaining agreement, and all bike messenger companies are very different. Everybody says that there is no one-size-fits-all solution, which makes negotiations difficult, but she is confident that they will be able to develop something that works. Only recently, a bike messenger companies association was established. Communication is the key. Regarding the company agreement, she also needs the support of the law because the companies will not do anything unless they are obliged to do so by law.

Final statements and conclusion

Barbara Kauffmann

Director, Employment and Social Governance Directorate at the Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, European Commission

"I think it is clear that in cooperation with all stakeholders, governments, social partners and civil societies we all need to work towards a digital economy that is based on high-quality working conditions, a skilled labour force and modern and adequate social protection."

Thank you very much.

I have to say this has been a very interesting day and I would again like to thank the Austrian Presidency but also everybody who actively participated in these discussions and even in the dance performance. I think we had a lot of very pertinent presentations today that focused on the different aspects of digitalisation of work, such as the various forms of platform work, including the different working conditions. We also heard some insider views which I found very interesting, for instance how those working as bike delivery riders organise themselves.

The fact that there is a crucial need for social protection and skills formation was also stressed with regard to the role of policy makers and social partners when it comes to dealing with the world of work. Despite the different aspects highlighted today, I think that in many respects we share similar views and that our views indeed converge. I think what was said in Session 1 this morning, namely what cannot be prevented needs to be directed, can be applied quite generally to digitalisation. When talking about convergence of views, at least this last discussion shows that there are still many issues we need to address. A crucial question raised in this context is: who benefits from all this? Now, analysis and developing a shared understanding of the structural change we are facing is the most appropriate policy response and a first step in the right direction. And events like this provide an important contribution in this respect – even if they also reveal some big information gaps that we need to close.

We have also learned that these developments are not new, that automation and new business models offer opportunities and that innovative technologies increase productivity, create new jobs, facilitate inclusiveness and help create a better work-life balance. We have also identified some benefits like the possibilities for supporting people, for instance in their old age. At the same time, however, it is clear that these new developments – including the still relatively small platform economy – raise some concerns about a possible decrease in standards of full-time employment and about the effects this type of work may have on a person's working life. We also discussed which type of multi-job working history will require more investment and skills. Questions related to health and safety and social security were also raised in

this context. I agree with what was stressed regarding the need to have a comprehensive strategy at the national level. And by the way, we also believe a comprehensive strategy is needed at EU level, in addition to all the elements I mentioned in terms of employment and social policy dealt with in the initiatives that are already on the table. There is, of course, a broader digital agenda and there is also, as mentioned, the need for further discussion about tax and benefits systems. In this regard, there are still some issues in terms of how the digital economy could make a better contribution to the revenue raised, which could also contribute towards providing better social security.

I have already mentioned some of our key initiatives like the promotion of skills, the skills agenda and the new directive on transparent and predictable working conditions, but also access to social security protection. All these topics are now on the table, keeping both the Austrian Presidency and the Commission very busy. Since it has come up a couple of times, I should also mention the work-life balance directive to which a proposal is about to be appended. We believe that this would make an important contribution towards facilitating a better reconciliation of private and working life. It would not only facilitate a better integration of women in the working life but also help men to become better involved with family care - it thus has a multi-directional impact. For us the overall framework, as mentioned before, is the European Pillar of Social Rights – the 20 principles of the pillar which were subscribed to by the Member States, by the European Parliament and which have also been endorsed by the social partners. We find it both ambitious and operational and I think it provides a good guiding framework. I should also mention the EU's new Multiannual Financial Framework, covering seven years, in which we have also put an important emphasis on the European Social Fund plus, as it is now known, on re-skilling, on promoting new competences and on enabling people to benefit from opportunities opening up in the new world of work. Similarly, in the context of the debates on the new Financial Framework, we are currently also discussing the content of the new research budget and the topics to be supported. Topics, such as an inclusive society and the impact of digital skills will play a role here.

So, I think it is clear that in cooperation with all stakeholders, governments, social partners and civil societies, we need to work towards a digital economy that is based on high-quality working conditions, skilled labour force and modern and adequate social protection. I think the Austrian Presidency was right to put this topic on the agenda again. It is extremely important. We need Member States and social partners alike to really continue to deal with this subject in a pro-active manner and we at the European Commission also remain committed to continuing this dialogue and to working towards more resilient and protective labour markets. Thank you very much.

Edeltraud Glettler

Director General for European, International and Social Policy Issues, Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Health and Consumer Protection

"Through the initiatives it has launched, the Austrian EU Presidency seeks to contribute to fostering a common and shared understanding of these new forms of work including platform work, and we hope that we have been able to enrich the debate at the European level."

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me try and summarise what we have heard today. First of all, I would like to thank you all. We have talked about platform work and we have heard that it indeed opens up many opportunities for workers: additional income, more flexibility, the possibility to gain professional experience or access to the labour market. The goal to be pursued is that the advantages outnumber the disadvantages. Of course, this new form of work also entails challenges and this means that society needs to protect its weaker members, especially as regards insecure labour and/or employment relations or when the pay is not in line with legal requirements or when it is not transparent which data is being processed, used or stored by platforms. In addition, we have to talk about flexibility, which can also be related to job insecurity and long and irregular working hours, which cause stress.

We have also heard today that many platform workers' employment status is still undefined and unclear. It is, however, very important that their status be clarified because a person's employment status has implications for social security, further education and training opportunities and the application of some legal provisions governing work. Therefore, we need to contribute pro-actively towards shaping the world of work in order to prepare our citizens as best we can for these changes. Employment effects need to be indicated early. As regards the transformation costs caused by digitalisation, we as the EU Presidency have been dealing with the following issues at great length. The opportunities digitalisation offers to people with disabilities and limited mobility in particular were not discussed today, but this is also a focus of our work – the opportunities offered by digitalisation with a view to better working conditions for everybody, meaning enabling self-determined work. We see that there is an increasing need for self-determination. And this is a trend that is in keeping with the development of work 4.0. We have talked extensively about social and legal protection in the context of these new forms of work, we have talked about employment effects attributable to digitalisation and quality of work, meaning digital structural change. We have also dealt with the creation of governance systems to protect workers. And this is why it should be our common and shared objective that all forms of work that are being created and have emerged as a result of digitalisation are covered by social protection systems and that all fundamental labour law standards are being observed. This not only serves to protect workers but is also in the interests of ensuring the financial viability of our social systems.

Given the fact that there are so many different platforms and so many different social protection systems in place, a European system of rules and regulations cannot be the solution. And Austria, in particular the Austrian Presidency, has always advocated subsidiarity. We can only emphasise this. When implementing the European Pillar of Social Rights, the EU is called upon to encourage EU Member States to promote social aspects within the framework of digitalisation.

Another point I would like to pick up on from today's debate is the use of algorithms for the delivery of management tasks. Algorithmic management could be an approach towards promoting equal opportunities. It is, however, necessary to make sure that decisions are not influenced by features such as gender, origin etc. Today, the use of algorithms is still not transparent, and we therefore have to preclude that algorithms will continue to create systems that cause disadvantages.

There is also a lack of transparency as to which meta-data of platform workers is being collected and to what extent it is used for their profiles. This is also a challenge that needs to be dealt with in the future. We need to take a very close look at this, monitor these developments and contribute to making sure that those who work in these new forms of work gain insights into these algorithm processes and also have a possibility to react.

Platform workers should also be able to take the data relating to their collected assessments with them if they change to another platform. This means that we want to ensure data operability and portability. The platform economy also creates transparency with respect to gainful activities and may facilitate shifting work out of the informal economy. This opportunity should be harnessed through pro-active corporation and information-sharing and, as I have mentioned before, we need to ensure data protection and the protection of our right to privacy. Today's debate has clearly shown that new forms of work, and platform work in particular, create new challenges for the social partners and also for industrial relations, but they also open up opportunities for co-determination in the work place. As we have heard, numerous different activities and initiatives have already been launched by the social partners. Events such as today's conference can certainly make a contribution to promoting cross-border sharing of information and experience so that we can actually learn from one another.

At the beginning of this conference, Federal Minister Hartinger-Klein, addressed the many different facets of platform work. We have heard that one and the same platform may differ considerably depending on the country it is active in, but it may differ even within countries, especially as regards employment relationships. This heterogeneity that characterises platform work and the fact that the different types of platforms are also marked by different labour and employment conditions must be taken into consideration when designing policies in order to prevent and avoid undesirable side effects. Through the initiatives it has launched, the Austrian EU Presidency seeks to contribute to fostering a common and shared understanding of these new forms of work including platform work, and we hope that we have been able to enrich the debate at the European level. In addition to the informal meeting

of Employment and Social Policy Ministers in July 2018, the informal meeting of the Social Protection Committee and today's conference, the topic of digitalisation of work will also be dealt with at the informal meeting of the Employment Committee, which will be held tomorrow and the day after tomorrow here in Vienna. We also plan to submit key messages to the Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council in December 2018. This is a topic that will be further developed and handed over to the next presidency.

Before coming to the end, let me highlight that the Federal Minister would have told you that change is something absolutely positive that should be accepted in a pro-active manner in order to harness the opportunities that come with digitalisation. It is a fact that digitalisation will have a substantial and far-reaching impact on the next decade, we could indeed say that we are already in the middle of these changes. And this is precisely where policy makers need to step in. We require pro-active policies, as it is only through pro-active policies that we will be able to ensure that the gains from digitalisation are distributed fairly and for the benefit of everyone. We can design the framework conditions under which technology operates, and this is why it is not us human beings who should adjust and adapt to technology, but rather technology and framework conditions should be shaped by us in a way that they support people.

Let me conclude this conference by quoting Saint Thomas Aquinas: "You have to pray for miracles, but you have to work for change."

I would like to thank the European Commission most warmly for its support, especially for the financial and thematic support for this conference, for its close cooperation in preparing this conference and for the interesting contributions today. A big thank you also goes to all of you, to all the speakers for their enriching presentations and to all participants and the audience for their commitment which was also reflected in the questions submitted via Slido. My special word of thanks goes to our facilitator, Gerald Gross, and the interpreters.

It just remains for me to say that I wish you a very lively and fruitful debate in the various forums and have a safe trip home.

Thank you very much and goodbye.

Annex

Programme

Moderation

Gerald Gross, Austrian media coach, former journalist and TV presenter

19 September 2018

08:00 Registration

09:00 Start of conference

09:00 – 09:30 OPENING

09:00 – 09:10 **Beate Hartinger-Klein**, Federal Minister of Labour, Social Affairs, Health and Consumer Protection

09:10 – 09:20 **Barbara Kauffmann**, Director, Employment and Social Governance Directorate, Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, European Commission

09:20 – 09:30 **Heinz Koller**, Assistant Director-General, International Labour Organization

09:30 – 12:15 SESSION 1: ORGANISING NEW FORMS OF WORK

09:30 – 09:35 Introduction by Moderator

09:35 – 09:50 **Loukas Stemitsiotis**, Head of the Thematic Analysis Unit, European Commission, Directorate for Employment and Social Governance; presents the Employment and Social Developments in Europe (ESDE) report 2018: "The Changing World of Work: Beyond Digitalisation", focusing on the impact of new forms of work, notably platform work

09:50 – 10:05 **Wolfgang Greif**, European Economic and Social Committee; speaks on "The changing nature of employment relationships and its impact on maintaining a living wage"

10:05 – 10:20 **Istvan Vanyolos**, Policy Officer, Employment Strategy Unit, European Commission, Directorate for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion and **Mark Keese**, Head of Skills and

Employability Division, OECD Directorate for Employment, Labour and Social Affairs; presents the study “Policy responses to new forms of work”

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| 10:20 – 10:30 | Questions from the audience |
| 10:30 – 10:45 | Oliver Schürer , Senior Scientist, Architecture Theory and Philosophy of Technics, Institute of Architectural Sciences, TU Wien; Presentation “Raum-Spiel”; a question & answer game |
| 10:45 – 11:15 | COFFEE BREAK and “Raum-Spiel” interaction with the audience in Foyer D |
| 11:15 – 12:05 | Round Table on Session 1: Organising work in the context of new forms of work: <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Ursula Huws, Professor at the University of Hertfordshire■ Jon Messenger, Senior Research Officer, Conditions of Work and Employment Programme, International Labour Organization■ Manuela Vollmann, Managing Director of ABZ* Arbeit, Bildung Zukunft AUSTRIA (Work, Education, Future, AUSTRIA)■ Christian Bodewig, Program Leader Inclusive Growth, World Bank |
| 12:05 – 12:15 | Summary by moderator and questions from the audience |
| 12:15 – 13:45 | LUNCH and “Raum-Spiel” interaction with the audience in Foyer D |
| 13:45 – 16:40 | SESSION 2: ORGANISING WORK AND EMPLOYMENT RELATIONSHIPS IN THE PLATFORM ECONOMY |
| 13:45 – 14:00 | Annarosa Pesole , Researcher, Joint Research Centre of the European Commission; speaks on the COLLEEM Project |

"Investigating the Extent and Impact of Platform Work in the EU"

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| 14:00 – 14:15 | Irene Mandl , Head of Employment Unit, European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions; presents the study "Digital age: Employment and working conditions of selected types of platform work" and the Eurofound online resource on platform work |
| 14:15 – 14:35 | Dance performance "Doppelgänger" |
| 14:35 – 14:50 | Jovana Karanovic , PhD Candidate, VU Amsterdam and Founder, Reshaping Work; presents the study "A lost voice: Platform workers' responses to labour platforms under different regulatory structures" |
| 14:50 – 15:05 | Konstantinos Pouliakas , Expert in the Department for Skills and Labour Market, European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop); presents initial results of the CrowdLearn study "Skills formation and skills matching in online platform work: Practices and policies for promoting crowdworkers' continuous learning" |
| 15:05 – 15:15 | Questions from the audience |

15:15 – 15:35 COFFEE BREAK

and "**Raum-Spiel**" interaction with the audience in Foyer D

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| 15:35 – 16:30 | Round Table on Session 2: Organising employment relationships in the platform economy |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Peter Scherrer, Deputy Secretary-General, European Trade Union Confederation■ Rebekah Smith, Deputy Director in the Social Affairs department, BusinessEurope■ Adele Siegl, Foodora Vienna■ Matthias Niebuhr, Head of Legal, MyHammer■ Martin Risak, Professor at the Department of Labour Law and Law of Social Security at the University of Vienna |

16:30 – 16:40 Summary by moderator
and questions from the audience

16:40 – 17:00 FINAL STATEMENTS AND CONCLUSIONS

16:40 – 16:50 **Barbara Kauffmann**, Director, Employment and Social Governance Directorate, Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, European Commission

16:50 – 17:00 Beate Hartinger-Klein, Federal Minister of Labour, Social Affairs, Health and Consumer Protection

17:00 End of conference

Concept note

Conference on Digitalisation of Work – Issues relating to quality of work in the context of new forms of work

In the course of societal change and in view of new economic activities facilitated by the increasing use of digital technology, new forms of employment have emerged or become more established. Some of these new forms of work change traditional direct employer-employee relationships or the way in which work is carried out and/or organised, or even both. New forms of employment offer both advantages and disadvantages for both employer and employees. They may facilitate access to the labour market, although it is still uncertain whether they may actually act as a stepping stone into "traditional" employment or rather contribute to labour market segmentation. What most new forms of employment have in common is a high degree of flexibility, and in some cases a high degree of autonomy may also be possible. Although both flexibility and autonomy are as such indeed desirable, they can also go hand in hand with job insecurity and social as well as professional isolation. Likewise, platform work, where supply and demand for paid work are coordinated via an online platform, opens up opportunities while at the same time presenting challenges.

It is thus necessary to analyse these challenges in detail and to find answers both at national and at European level.

In this spirit, the Council of the European Union invited the Member States, the European Commission and the social partners in its conclusions of 7 December 2017 to acknowledge the emergence of new forms of employment, while ensuring decent working conditions, adequate social protection and equal opportunities for all and finding ways to mitigate potentially adverse effects of a changing labour market in particular on vulnerable people. Opportunities arising from technological developments should be explored to broaden active participation and fight discrimination and exclusion in the labour market. Employment relationships that lead to precarious working conditions shall be prevented.

One of the principles of the European Pillar of Social Rights, jointly proclaimed by the European Parliament, the Council and the European Commission in November 2017, states that regardless of the type and duration of their employment relationship, workers, and, under comparable conditions, the self-employed, have the right to adequate social protection. Implementing this principle, the European Commission proposed a Council Recommendation on "Access to social protection for workers and the self-employed" as part of the Social Fairness Package. The aim is to encourage Member States to support all self-employed and atypical workers.

Building on the work of the trio partners Estonia and Bulgaria, the **Conference on Digitalisation of Work – Issues relating to quality of work in the context of new forms of work** will focus in particular on the organisation of new forms of work and on the design of work and employment relationships in the platform economy. In

addition to issues related to working time and workload, virtual migration and algorithmic management, discussions will focus on opportunities for co-determination within companies and changes in employer-employee relations. The topic is in line with the work programme of the Austrian Federal Government, which focuses on making Austria "fit for the challenges of digitalisation". The goal is to seize opportunities and create the necessary framework conditions. One of the three major priorities defined in the programme of the Austrian Presidency of the Council of the European Union is "Securing prosperity and competitiveness through digitalisation".

One of the objectives of this conference is to contribute to the continuation and deepening of this debate based on the presentation of the latest research findings and the exchange of best-practise examples. This will facilitate supporting adequate framework conditions at European and national level with a view to enabling EU citizens to benefit from the opportunities offered by digitalisation.

Information from the Presidency⁹

Digitalisation of Work

One of the three main priorities defined in the programme of the Austrian Presidency is "Securing prosperity and competitiveness through digitalisation". Building on the work of the trio partners Estonia and Bulgaria, the conference on Digitalisation of Work, which was co-financed by the European Commission, focused in particular on the organisation of new forms of work and on the organisation of work and employment relationships in the platform economy. In addition to issues relating to working time and workload, virtual migration and algorithmic management, participants also dealt with opportunities for co-determination and changes in employer-employee relations.

With a view to contributing to a continuation and deepening of the debate, the latest scientific findings were presented at this conference. Building on these findings, appropriate framework conditions at European and national level could be supported thus enabling EU citizens to take advantage of the opportunities offered by digitalisation.

The Austrian Presidency draws the following conclusions:

- **Fully tapping into the opportunities offered by digitalisation and actively shaping digitalisation**
 - Digitalisation offers major opportunities while at the same time presenting us with a large number of challenges. It is thus important to take a positive approach towards change and to use the opportunities offered by digitalisation.
 - Digital change must be fully aligned with European values aimed at full employment, social progress, a high level of protection, the reduction of poverty and inequalities, and must build on the European Pillar of Social Rights.
 - Technologies should be promoted and designed in a way that they support people rather than making people adapt to technology.

⁹ This information note was presented to the Council (Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs) on 6 December 2018.

- Only an active policy that seeks to shape the future of the world of work will be able to contribute towards distributing the gains from digitalisation in an equitable manner. The goal is to ensure that everyone stands to benefit from the enormous opportunities offered by new technologies – workers, citizens and businesses alike. The platform economy offers the opportunity to make undeclared work visible. This can enable both better law enforcement and the shifting of work away from the informal economy. This opportunity should be used pro-actively through cooperation and exchange of information, while at the same time protecting data and privacy.
 - New forms of work and in particular platform work create new challenges for social partners, change employer-employee relations and possibilities for co-determination within the company. This also includes the issue of platform workers who are classified as self-employed and who frequently perform activities similar to those carried out by employees. Reacting to this situation, a large number of new activities and initiatives have already been launched by the social partners. The goal is thus to promote learning from each other based on intensified cross-border exchange of information and relevant experience.
- **A Europe that protects also needs to protect its employees**
 - We should strive to ensure that all flexible forms of employment created and emerging as a result of digitalisation be covered by comprehensive social protection systems, that basic labour standards be maintained and that quality of work be taken into account.
 - Currently, the employment status of many platform workers is unclear. However, social security, training opportunities and the application of specific legal provisions on working conditions are regulated based on employment status. We are therefore called upon to mitigate potential adverse effects of a changing world of work, safeguard social and labour law related protection and ensure opportunities for further training.
 - New technologies create new challenges, such as the possibility of seamless monitoring of workers. This calls for transparency, fairness and appropriate conflict resolution mechanisms.

- Another important topic in this context is ensuring data interoperability: platform workers should be able to take their data and collected assessments with them when moving from one platform to another.

New forms of work and especially platform work are highly diverse and develop and/or change rapidly

- It is assumed that platform work constitutes a small, yet rapidly growing element of the labour market. However, as yet no accurate figures are available on its size or the exact number of platform workers and therefore its importance for the labour market in the European Union is currently very difficult to assess. For this reason, we should monitor developments closely. By expanding EU-wide monitoring, the EU can make an important contribution in this respect.
- The same platform can take on very different forms in different countries and even within one and the same country employment relationships may differ substantially on one and the same platform. Policy measures therefore have to take the heterogeneity of platform work into account and the fact that the various forms of platform work are characterised by a wide range of different working and employment conditions.

▪ **Next steps...**

- Addressing opportunities and challenges by involving all actors and in line with the principle of subsidiarity.
- Developing a flexible and effective strategy aimed at addressing the multiple challenges and promoting the exchange of experience and good practices, for which there are already a large number of established structures and practices in place at EU level.

The European Commission is invited to continue to give high priority to the topic and to consider developing a White Paper on the effects of digitalisation on working conditions and social protection of workers.

List of abbreviations

| | |
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| AI | Artificial Intelligence |
| CEDEFOP | European Centre for Development and Vocational Training |
| COLLEEM | COLLaborative Economy and Employment |
| EESC | European Economic and Social Committee |
| EFTA | European Free Trade Association |
| EU | European Union |
| G7 | Group of Seven |
| G20 | Group of Twenty |
| GDP | Gross Domestic Product |
| GPS | Global Positioning System |
| ICT | Information and Communications Technology |
| ILO | International Labour Organization |
| OECD | Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development |
| USA | United States of America |
| T/ICTM work | Telework / Information and Communications Technology - Mobile work |
| UK | United Kingdom |

 Federal Ministry
Labour, Social Affairs, Health
and Consumer Protection

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