

Building a competitive and futureproof labour market

Strategic Dialogue event of 21st June 2017, Thon EU Hotel, Brussels

Background

Linked to the thought-leadership work of the World Employment Confederation-Europe on the changing world of work and the publication of the White Paper on the Future of Work, the World Employment Confederation-Europe hosted on 21st June 2017 the high-level strategic dialogue event “Building a competitive and futureproof labour market” in Brussels. The event included keynote speeches of Commissioner Marianne Thyssen, the World Employment Confederation-Europe Managing Director Denis Pennel and Steve Bainbridge from CEDEFOP. Two panel debates in the context of the event focused on how labour law needs to adapt to reflect the new diversity of the workplace and the multitude of working conditions and the access to social rights regardless of the workers’ employment relationship or status. This report aims to provide a brief overview on the presentations and discussions. The event gathered representatives of the EU institutions, social partners, employment industry representatives and stakeholders to provide a platform for discussions on the approaches to build a competitive and futureproof labour market.

Annemarie Muntz: Welcome address

Annemarie Muntz, President of the World Employment Confederation-Europe, welcomed participants to the strategic dialogue. She reminded in her opening remarks the EU Commission approach for regulating non-standard forms of work, such as the Directives on fixed-term contracts, part-time work and agency work and highlighted the need for a level-playing field on the labour market. Annemarie Muntz thereafter focused on the need to reduce segmentation; segmentation between employment and unemployed, linked to skills and due to a lack of mobility. She concluded by underlining the role of the employment industry in creating a futureproof labour market, highlighting the broad range of services offered by the industry, the role of the employment industry in offering quality jobs, the need for effective cooperation between public and private employment services and the practices within the industry to offer portable and transferable rights. Commenting on the current EU Debates on the written statement Directive and on the access to social protection, she stressed that focus should be laid on implementing existing EU law, rather than revising Directives or creating new EU legislation. She concluded that the employment industry can certainly act as benchmark in the area of securing portable and transferable rights, particularly based on the bipartite funds established in several European countries.



Denis Pennel: Current trends and main challenges in the world of work

After the opening by Annemarie Muntz, Denis Pennel, Managing Director of the World Employment Confederation-Europe gave a presentation on current trends and main challenges in the world of work. He focused on key trends in the world of work, such as the on-demand economy, extended enterprises, changing attitudes to work, the human cloud and the importance of ICT. As an approach to address and respond to these trends, Denis Pennel presented the concept of biodiversity, including the diversity of people, the diversity of forms of work and ecosystems. Denis Pennel continued his presentation by highlighting challenges linked to diverse forms of work, including the classification of workers, risk for workers, the need to develop employability and training, to secure health and safety at work, as well as the protection of personal data. Denis Pennel concluded by presenting 5 policy recommendations, stressing the need to give up the “winner takes it all” approach, focus labour market policies on the most vulnerable, promote responsible intermediation, ensure a level-playing field between all forms of work and define a new social deal.



EU Commissioner Marianne Thyssen: Current priorities of the European Commission to build a competitive and futureproof labour market

Commissioner Marianne Thyssen underlined that challenges linked to globalisation, digitalisation, ageing and



changing work patterns, while there are also opportunities linked to a better economic environment, rising private investment and falling unemployment rates. Commissioner Thyssen went on presenting the EU Pillar of Social Rights, which is put forward to enhance convergence, invest in people and strengthen competitiveness. The Pillar of Social Rights includes 20 principles, which are presented in three categories, namely equal opportunities, fair working conditions and social

protection and inclusion. The Commissioner underlined that the pillar requires action at various levels, including Member States, the EU institutions and social partners. Commissioner Thyssen furthermore underlined that in a fast changing world of work, new work arrangements and ways of working are emerging. To address these, accompanying initiatives linked to the Pillar of Social Rights have been launched, focusing on the written statement directive, the access to social protection and the Working Time Directive.

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Commissioner Thyssen concluded by underlining the role of responsible and modern employment services, which are at the front line in working with people and helping them to progress in the labour market. She underlined that the employment industry plays a key role in overcoming the division between insiders and outsiders and that the Commission encourages closer cooperation between public and private employment services to support job seekers and particularly those not in employment, education or training (NEETS). Commissioner Thyssen underlined the need for better cross-border cooperation in the framework of EURES and the need to develop partnerships to create a futureproof labour market. She concluded that “we cannot slow the pace of the changing world of work and society in which we live. But, together, we can ensure that nobody is left behind.”

“How labour law needs to adapt to reflect the new diversity of the workplace and the multitude of working conditions?”

The first panel debate focused on “How labour law needs to adapt to reflect the new diversity of the workplace and the multitude of working conditions?” and included as speakers Adam Pokorny, DG



Employment, Heinz Becker, Member of the European Parliament, Maxime Cerutti, BusinessEurope and Denis Maessen, European Forum of Independent Professionals. Adam Pokorny underlined the need to address the increasing fragmentation and segmentation, which is also an increasing concern voiced by the European Parliament. He then focused on the policy response, explaining the consultations launched on the Written Statement Directive and on

the access to social protection. Adam Pokorny underline the need to use the opportunities linked to new forms of work, as these drive job creation and provide opportunities for people with a distance to the labour market. Maxime Cerutti focused in his intervention on how to adapt to the changing environment on the need to strengthen competitiveness and to build partnerships for reform. He highlighted the opportunities linked to digitalisation and underlined the important role of social partners in managing the adaptation to change. Commenting on the role of the European Parliament, Heinz Becker underlined its role as co-legislator and in defining some common, supranational rules in the changing world of work. He highlighted the importance of work mobility, which will be facilitated via the EU Mobility scheme EURES, in which private employment services can play an increasingly important role. Heinz Becker also stressed that challenges of the future cannot be effectively dealt without social partners and effective social dialogue. Denis Maessen underlined the need for diverse forms of employment and that there is no one-size fits all solution to EU employment policy and social challenges. While he underlined that the social dimension of European integration must be maintained, he stressed that EU legislation and common rules are not the only and often not the most relevant policy response. In any case, these should not impose burdens or limit the role of self-employed on the labour market, as independent professionals play an increasingly important role in the changing world of work.

Presentation by Steve Bainbridge, CEDEFOP

The first session after the coffee break was dedicated to skills policies in a changing world of work and introduced by a presentation of Steve Bainbridge, CEDEFOP.

Steve Bainbridge underlined the key role of education and training in adapting to changing economic and labour market contexts and that education and training are particularly important for young people. He stressed the need to invest in soft skills and of developing trust and confidence of the workers and job seekers.



Steve Bainbridge underlined that while dual learning is a key component of a modern and futureproof skills policy, currently only 25 percent of the companies in the EU have apprenticeship schemes in place. He stressed furthermore that skills and training policies can play a key role in re-integrating labour market outsiders and that effective skills and training policies should be built on partnerships and cooperation between business, social partners and education and training providers. Through these partnerships, it should be possible to bring the world of education and work closer together and create a more inclusive labour market.

How can we secure continuity of access to social rights and social protection for workers regardless of their employment relationship(s) or status?



The second and final panel debate focused on the access to social protection and social rights and included as speakers Valdis Zagorskis (DG Employment), Oliver Roethig (Regional Secretary of Uni-Europa) and Claude Emanuel Triomphe from Astrees. Valdis Zagorskis presented the ongoing EU Commission initiative and social partners' consultation on access to social protection, underlining the need to find solutions to make social benefits easier transferable, if workers are changing jobs and

employment status' more frequently. Solutions should be found to create new forms of security, when employment contracts and work relationships are becoming less stable. Valdis Zagorskis also underlined the need to rethink the terms of standard and non-standard forms of work at a time where the labour market is characterised by increased diversity of forms of work. Oliver Roethig (UNI Europa) stressed that work is an important part of life, but that work also needs to be provided in a secure way by setting the right conditions and by providing employment and work security. He called for working together for futureproof quality jobs, empower workers through social dialogue in the agency sector beyond. Oliver Roethig underlined that

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temporary agency work can, if appropriately organised, be a tool to empower people on the labour market. Claude Emanuel Triomphe underlined that there is no need for resignation, but many opportunities linked to the changing world of work. He advocated for looking at the reality of the labour market and for designing universally. He underlined that there has been a welcomed change in the tone of discussion on social rights in Brussels.

Closing of the strategic dialogue event by Bettina Schaller

Bettina Schaller, Vice-President of the World Employment Confederation-Europe closed the strategic dialogue event, calling for openness, dynamics and inclusiveness in the labour market. She stressed the need



for biodiversity on the labour market as also presented by Denis Pennel, for investing in skills and employability and on the need for access to social protection to create an adaptable labour market. Bettina Schaller underlined that there is no one-size fits all solution to employment and labour market challenges. The World Employment Confederation-Europe will continue the dialogue with policy makers and stakeholders on the changing world of work: Discussing the contribution of

the employment industry to inclusive and futureproof labour markets, celebrating the 50th anniversary of the World Employment Confederation in September 2017 in Paris and looking forward to present the results of a currently ongoing project on online talent platforms, labour market intermediaries and the changing world of work in 2018.



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