



High-Level Conference
FUTURE OF WORK: A Lifecycle Approach
21-22 March 2018, Sofia, Bulgaria

Concept Note

1. Scene-setter

The changes induced by the future of work are gaining increased attention at international, European and national level. To understand and respond effectively to the challenges related to globalisation, demographic changes and new technologies, the International Labour Organisation has launched the 'Future of Work Initiative'. The European Pillar of Social Rights jointly proclaimed by the European Parliament, the Council of the European Union and the European Commission in November 2017 serves as a compass for the development of policies to respond to the challenges arising from the changing world of work, including at European level. In order to shape the future of work in Europe while contributing to the sustainability and inclusiveness of European economies and societies, timely efforts in collaboration with the social partners are needed.

2. Objective

The objective of the Conference is to encourage an exchange of views on challenges and opportunities related to the future of work in the context of a lifecycle approach. The discussions will also focus on possibilities to improve the synergies between different policies in order to increase their efficiency and effectiveness. To achieve this, policymakers from the EU, European Free Trade Association (EFTA)/European Economic Area (EEA) and Western Balkans, and representatives of international organisations, social partners and civil society organisations will be brought together to discuss possible ways forward to respond to the changing world of work. The debates and outcomes of the Conference will feed into the draft Council conclusions on the future of work to be adopted during the Bulgarian Presidency.

3. Future challenges in the area of policies for human capital formation

Demographic changes, along with globalisation and the development of new technologies, are at the heart of the evolution of the social reality experienced by European societies. Due to an increased life expectancy combined with lower fertility rates, the ageing population is a growing concern not only in industrialised economies but in almost all countries. Precisely because the share of the elderly is increasing and the share of children and young people is decreasing, the consequences on the age dependency ratio could be dramatic in the future. An ageing population directly affects the functioning and financial stability of our social systems, covering pensions, healthcare, social care and education as well as the labour market. This confirms the need to develop comprehensive measures to adapt the public sector to these processes and to provide better conditions for the inclusion of the older population. Measures should be targeted at promoting lifelong learning, encouraging longer working lives and improving people's ability to work. Investing in the care economy for the elderly may boost employment. At the same time, in order to reduce youth unemployment, further improvement of school-to-work transition measures, especially through investment in education and vocational training, is of key importance.



Early childhood development policies and services are among the most important tools for the development of practical knowledge and skills from an early age. Children are the age group that is the most at risk of poverty or social exclusion in a number of EU countries. Investing in measures for childhood development can notably help build foundational cognitive, social and emotional skills allowing children to succeed in fast-changing environments. Such skills are key in the new world of work for allowing citizens to integrate into the labour market and achieve successful transitions between jobs. As a consequence, measures in this area can act as a tool to fight exclusion and poverty related to a lack of skills.

In this context, it is essential to develop policies based on a comprehensive approach and coordinated action. Indeed, the development of practical knowledge and skills and improving access to education from an early age is only one aspect of implementing successful childhood development policies, one that focuses on children. Moreover, it has to be supported by measures targeting parents, such as promoting work-life balance as well as access to childcare and access to social protection.

New technologies represent both challenges and opportunities, as technological changes involve job destruction and creation as well as the transformation of existing jobs. They also lead to an evolving demand when it comes to skills requirements. While all sectors of the economy are concerned to some extent, these changes can have critical implications for workers, employers and industrial relations as a whole in the sectors that are the most affected.

According to the World Economic Forum's estimation technological developments will result in the loss of over 5 million jobs in 15 developed and developing economies¹. At the same time, 2.1 million new jobs will be created in the field of computer engineering and mathematics. Therefore policymakers should take timely measures to provide the labour force with the right skills for the new jobs if they want to seize the opportunities provided by digitalisation. Better policy planning is needed with a view to encouraging the creation of sustainable and high-quality jobs. Identifying the right skills that meet the needs of employers and anticipating future skills needs is the first step for effective planning of education, training and employment policies. Therefore, the development of innovative policy approaches and a strong connection between the acquired skills and labour market needs are key factors in promoting productive and high-quality employment and increasing labour market participation.

Across Europe, new forms of employment are emerging where the relationship between employer and employee, the organisation of work and working patterns differ from traditional models. Not all workers in new forms of employment benefit from a core of working conditions guaranteeing basic rights to working time (hours of work, rest periods, and work schedules), to remuneration and physical conditions and mental demands that exist in the workplace. A safe and healthy workplace is a fundamental right of every person and also a business imperative. Digitalisation and related changes in the world of work generate a wide range of new risks: while there are fewer risks related to physical health and safety, work-related stress is increasing because of new responsibilities and new forms of management, including continuous real-time control and evaluation of worker performance. Autonomy at work is increasing, but so are alienation and monotony. Workplace settings also vary widely in terms of size, sector, design, location, work processes, workplace culture, and resources. In addition, workers themselves are different in terms of age, gender, training, education, cultural

¹ *'The Future of Jobs: Employment, Skills and Workforce Strategy for the Fourth Industrial Revolution', World Economic Forum, January 2016.*



background, health and lifestyle, and access to preventive health care. This translates into a great diversity in occupational safety and health risks and the need for tailored interventions.

The labour and social security legislative framework has not yet evolved to consider how workers can be adequately protected in these new systems (obligations related to insurance, sick leave, workplace safety standards, protection from unfair dismissal and discrimination, minimum wages, and so on).

4. Questions for discussion:

First session: The future of work and demographic challenges

- What are the main challenges with regards to the ageing workforce?
- How to encourage longer working life and to improve ability to work and how to facilitate the transfer of experience between generations?
- How to promote sustainable work and healthy ageing from the start of working life?

Second session: Development of practical knowledge and skills from an early age

- How to strengthen integrated approaches for better early childhood education and care and better support for parents?
- How to improve access to quality early childhood development services?

Third session: The right skills for new jobs and the impact of digitalisation and automation on the labour market

- How to improve education, training and re-qualification policies to better match the skills with labour market needs?
- How to strengthen the effective partnership approach in the design, governance and implementation of the process of skills development?

Fourth session: New forms of work: Fair working conditions and adequate social protection

- How to ensure the sustainability of social security systems in a labour market that is changing due to digitalisation?
- How to ensure a proper work-life balance in the context of permanent connection through telecommunication technologies? Do we need to establish a right to disconnect?