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Shaping industrial relations in a digitalising services industry – Workshop 2: Labour Markets

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1 Introduction

The UNI Europa project „Shaping Industrial Relations in a Digitalising Services Industry - Challenges and Opportunities for Social Partners“, in cooperation with “ZSI – Zentrum für Soziale Innovation” and promoted by the European Commission, aims to identify and analyse change factors and explore new approaches for social partners on the challenges of maintaining effective industrial relations systems in a digitalising services industry. The project strives to provide policy advice for trade unions, social partners and policymakers on necessary adaptations of institutional frameworks for industrial relations, collective bargaining, social dialogue and capacity building for social partners. Challenges and opportunities are identified and analysed in particular with regard to workers’ representation at company level and collective bargaining as well as the work and organisation of trade unions in general.

Across the project, we are dividing the investigation into three aspects of services that are clearly interrelated.

- Under the heading of “**Service markets**” we look at changes in service production and delivery through digitalisation (for example, online services and self-service) and also on the impact of these changes on customers and society at large. It is one of the dimensions where rapid changes, disruptive innovations (for example platforms) need to be addressed. Here, we also address the status of services in “industrial” or economic policy in the context of your respective sector and country.
- “**Service labour markets**” addresses the development of service jobs, their quality and quantity. We focus on jobs with intermediate skill levels, and will also address atypical and precarious employment (including self-employment) in your sector/country, the development of skills and re-skilling and policies of addressing them.
- “**Company strategies and work organisation**” looks at the company level and your union’s information and experience with companies in your sector/country: We will address transnationalisation of service companies at large, outsourcing and offshoring, working conditions and ways of influencing them, interest representation and participation.

Each aspect of services was the subject of a workshop organised by UNI Europa for national trade unionists involved with the subject.

Service markets were addressed on October 19th at UNI Europa’s offices in Brussels;

Service labour markets on December 11, 2017 at ver.di’s headquarters in Berlin;

and **company strategies and work organisation** on February 27, 2018 at Unionen’s headquarters in Stockholm.

Workshops consisted of two presentations by social scientists involved in the field and discussion of participants first in three smaller groups that addressed specific issues in each subject, then in the plenary. Outcomes are documented in the present report. The working groups’ and plenaries’ conclusions feed into the 10point action plan that UNI Europa is developing for the project’s final conference on May 15 and 16, 2018 in Brussels.

Presentations and factsheets for each workshop and also the reports of the entire project are available here: <https://unieuropaprojects.org/shaping-industrial-relations/>.

2 Factsheet: Service labour markets (Ursula Holtgrewe)

2.1 *Digitalisation and employment*

Digitalisation is likely to challenge established notions of what a “job”, an “employer”, and a “worker” is. Not all these challenges are new: Service workers often work for both their employers and customers. Services are delivered through networks of companies and subcontractors. Flexible employment contracts have proliferated. For unions, variation among actual and potential constituencies is increasing, but collective bargaining and interest representation are still mostly based on assumptions of “normal” employment relationships circumscribed by companies and sectors. Challenges are to extend labour market regulation to “new” and emerging types of workers such as crowdworkers, and/or to reinvigorate regular, decent and sustainable “employment 4.0”.

2.2 *Automation of work?*

A debate on questions of good and sustainable work and employment in digitalized service economies is thus necessary. It has been overshadowed by the question of the number of jobs in digitalized economies and the potential for automation. The well-known study by Frey and Osborne (2013) considered some 47% of US jobs as susceptible to automation. Applications of their methodology to European countries yielded similar and even higher predictions (Bowles, 2014). The argument of these authors is that new advances in ICT, in artificial intelligence, speech and pattern recognition, data analytics and so on will soon allow the automation of both higher- and lower-skilled jobs that so far were resistant to automation (such as car driving, medical diagnoses, translation and so on).

However, these prognoses tend to confound jobs and tasks: Jobs generally consist of bundles of tasks that may be more or less susceptible to automation. Research into service work shows that routine service jobs contain non-routine tasks (such as documentation in care or team coordination in the flat hierarchies of cleaning), and routine tasks such as admin or secretarial work encroach on professional jobs. Task-based analyses result in less extreme prognoses. Arntz et al. (Arntz, Gregory, & Zierahn, 2016), thus find only 9% of automatable work in the US, and in between 6% (Korea, followed by Estonia and Finland) and 12% (Germany and Austria) in other OECD countries.

On the one hand, the mixture of automatable and non-automatable tasks in many jobs stands in the way of simple 1:1 automation. On the other hand, even if jobs are interactive or problem-solving, they may not be immune to more systemic automation efforts that shift the larger part of problem-solving onto the consumer or end-user (such as self-service in e-commerce). Nevertheless, such shifts take time and may require complementary and interrelated innovations in addition to the key technologies.

2.3 *Hollowing-out of labour markets: medium-paid jobs and polarisation*

Even before current digitalisation debates, labour market polarisation has been observed in both US and European labour markets. From the 1990s onwards, labour economists find increasing shares of both low- and high paying occupations in the labour market at the expense of the medium-skilled (Figure 1). This is explained to a large extent by technological change, but the impact of technology on the labour market has apparently changed. If technological change is skill-biased, technology substitutes for low-skilled work and enhances the productivity of higher-skilled work, leading to skill upgrading, that is, increases in higher-skilled employment. When both highly-skilled positions and low-skilled and low-paid jobs (especially in personal services) expand, it seems that now especially ICT substitutes for the routinised work done by middle-skilled employees. Remaining and expanding low-skilled work is less easily automated, for example in hospitality or care. Apart from technology, polarisation is explained by globalisation and offshoring (mostly in manufacturing, Goos et al. 2014), changing supply of skills, and

also by consumer demand, especially with regard to services. The argument here is that higher-earning workers can afford more time- and labour-intensive (personal) services (Autor 2015; Cirillo, 2016).

Employment polarisation concentrates in the services, whereas manufacturing has seen more skill upgrading. Real estate and business services are found among both the most expansive and among the most polarised sectors in Europe between 1997 and 2007 (Breemersch et al. 2017 p. 7). Hospitality, Commerce and financial services also have high combined shares of low- and highly-paid occupations. The most recent analyses by Eurofound (Fernández-Macías et al., 2017) cover the years 2011-2017 and find limits to further polarisation (Figure 2). Especially from 2013, employment increases again in the middle- and lower-paying occupations, and picks up especially in public services, that is, health and education. Employment growth still concentrates in the services, and the private services continue to show a polarised development. „Normal“ employment in these years only expands for the highly-skilled.

2.4 *Skills and training*

The literature widely agrees on the expected skill demands of digitalised services. ICT skills are considered critical, but in a wider view, workers will need those skills that are complemented by ICT and other technologies: problem-solving, creativity, collaboration and interaction. A common metaphor is “T-shaped skills” that combine in-depth expertise in one field (the vertical axis) with wider education, cognitive and social skills. However, in the EU-28, there is concern over skill shortages. The numbers of ICT graduates have declined from a peak in 2005-6 in many countries.¹ The expected lack of ICT professionals by 2020 is currently estimated at some 756,000 of which 226,000 are at management level (Hüsing, Korte, & Dashja, 2015).

All of this suggests tensions around skills that are not simply resolved by life-long learning or increasing the output of graduates in sciences and engineering: while almost half of the permanently employed have access to in-work training, it is only 32% of employees with fixed-term contracts and 19% of the self-employed (European Commission 2016). This suggests that precarious and atypical employment puts investment in human capital by companies and societies at risk.

2.5 *Atypical employment*

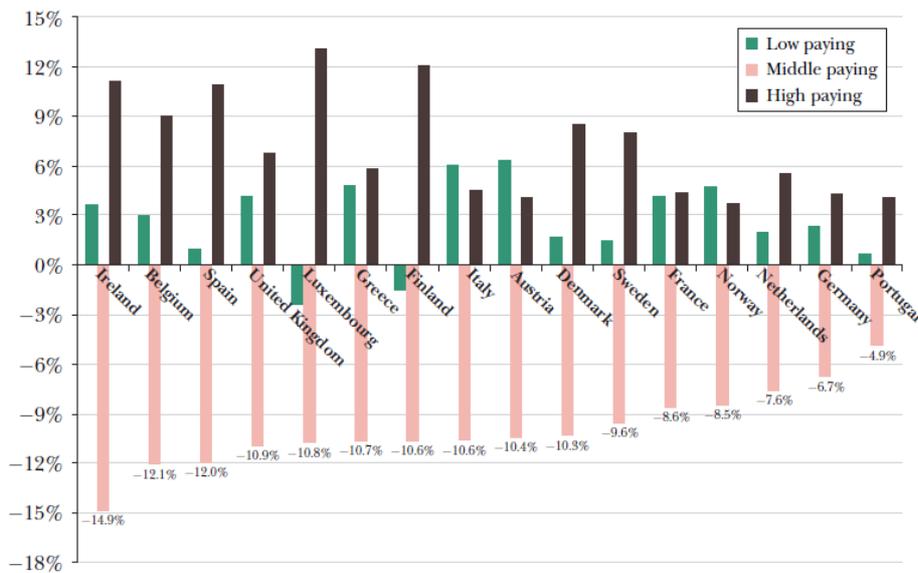
During and after the crisis, atypical employment has been increasing across Europe, and only since 2014 has permanent employment grown again (Figure 3) – but its levels have not come back to pre-crisis levels, and the shares of temporary employment have increased further. The recent Eurofound study on self-employment considers one in four self-employed as vulnerable through economic dependence on one or a few clients, low autonomy and financial vulnerability whereas half of the self-employed enjoy independence, autonomy and a good income (Vermeulen et al., 2017). Self-employment and other new hyper-flexible forms of employment such as zero-hours contracts or work “on demand” are found in diverse sectors and countries, both digitally mediated and with conventional contracts (Mandl, Curtarelli, Riso, Vargas, & Gerogiannis, 2015). They provide the context in which to consider digital-based crowdwork providing either virtual or space-dependent services. According to a series of recent surveys on crowdworking by Ursula Huws and colleagues (2017), commissioned by FEPS and UNI Europa, currently crowdworking is mostly an “extra” job and not much of a regular source of employment. Still, in between 8% of crowdworkers (UK) and 19% of crowdworkers report making more than 75% of their personal income from crowdworking (Figure 4). Combined with the experiments of

¹ http://euskillsparorama.ec.europa.eu/docs/AnalyticalHighlights/ICTProfessionals_en.pdf

conventional companies with platforms and highly flexible contracts in many service sectors, this may herald not comprehensive substitution of employment, but increased direct and indirect pressure of platforms on job quality in the services.

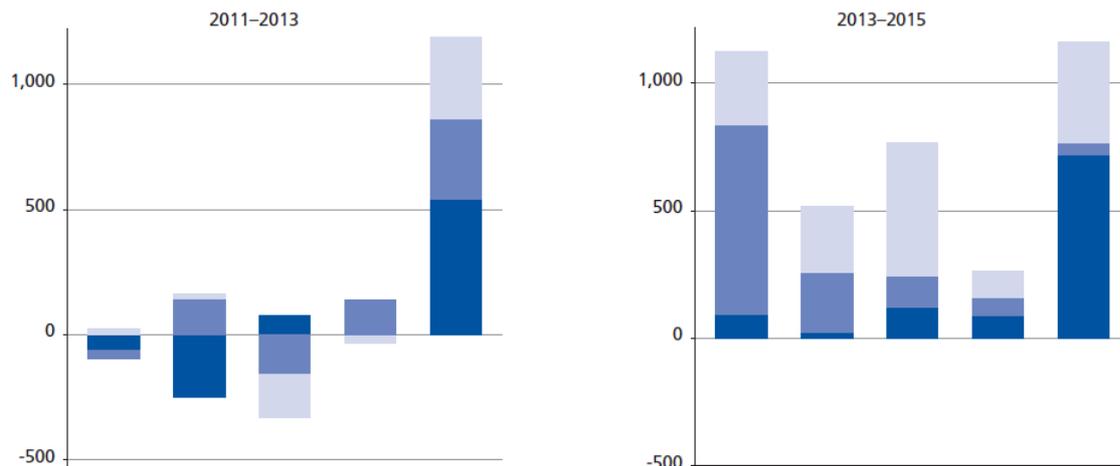
2.6 Annex

Figure 1: Change in occupational employment shares in low, middle, and high-wage occupations in EU countries 1993-2010



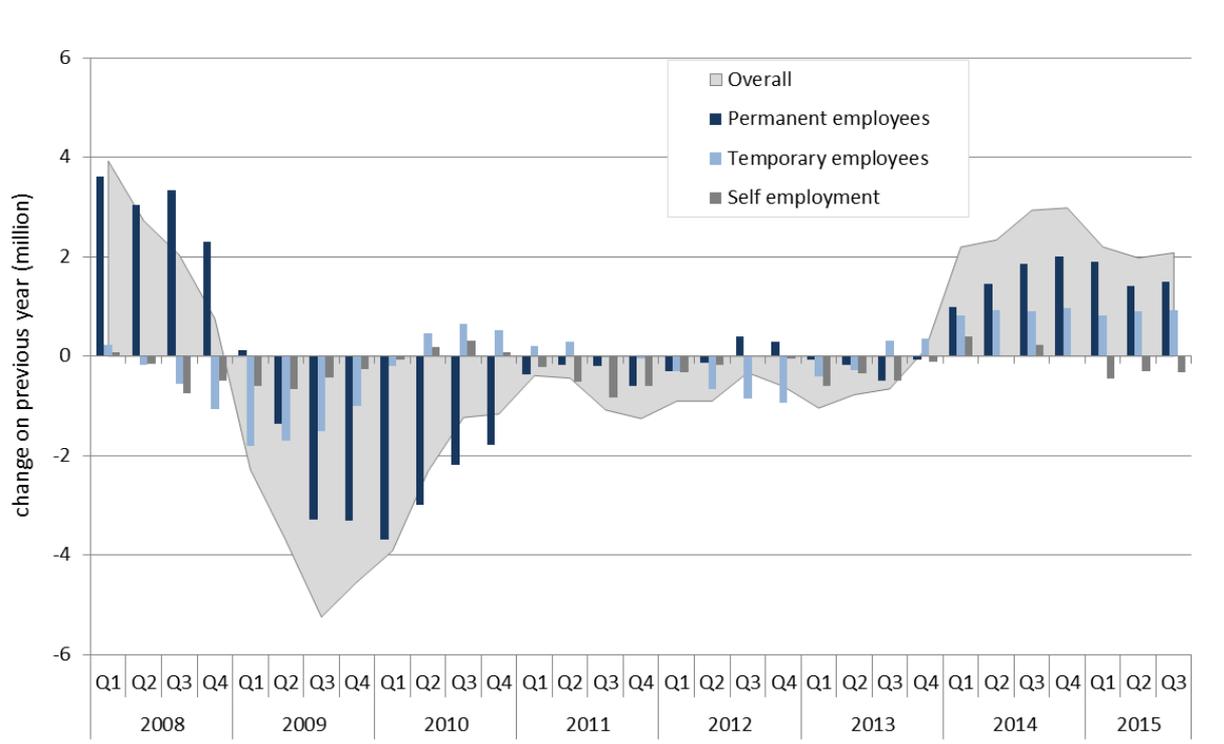
Source: Autor 2015, p.15, based on Goos et al. 2014.

Figure 2: Employment shifts (in thousands) by job-wage quintile and service sector grouping, EU, 2011 Q2–2015 Q2



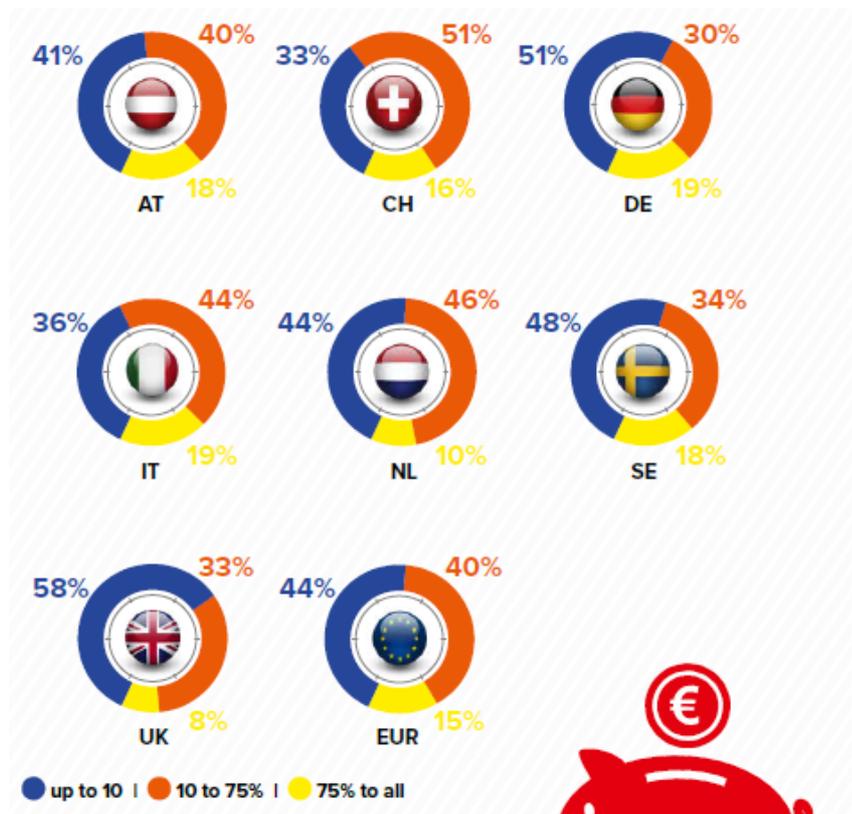
Source: Fernández-Macías, Hurley, Bisello 2017, p. 18 dark: private knowledge-intensive, middle: non-knowledge-intensive, light: public knowledge-intensive services

Figure 3: Changes in permanent, temporary employment and self-employment, EU 28 2008-2015



Source: Eurostat, European Commission 2016, p. 30

Figure 4: Earnings from crowdwork as share of all personal income



Source: <http://www.feps-europe.eu/assets/1eeb6041-28d5-4498-b545-dd8afb5a71bd/europeangigeconomy-shortversionpdf.pdf>

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3 Presentation 1: Prof. Gérard Valenduc (ETUI and University of Namur, BE) – Key trends in the labour market

Gérard Valenduc explained the different approaches to assessing the labour market impact of digitalisation and the reasons why such divergent figures emerge in various forecasts (Valenduc & Vendramin, 2016). Generally, the discrepancies result from different interpretations of the relationship between the potentials of new technologies, their potential to substitute human tasks, and the resulting changes in occupations and jobs, from substitution of entire jobs to changes in their content and demands. The well-known or even notorious “Oxford” study (Frey & Osborne, 2013) and its successors (Bowles, 2014) assume that both routine and non-routine tasks are increasingly being automated which immediately translates into considerable risk of destruction for the jobs and occupations containing these tasks. In this way, the alarming figures of some 40-50% of jobs to be automated come about.

Other studies take a more detailed look at job contents and find that within one occupation, job contents and tasks are very heterogeneous. Jobs consist of bundles of tasks and parts of these may be automatable while others are not. Using the OECD’s PIAAC database on competences at work, Arntz et al. conclude that some 8-12% of jobs are threatened by digitalisation but half of these are more likely to be transformed than destroyed (Arntz, Gregory, & Zierahn, 2016).

A third approach constructs automatability indexes from current surveys on present working conditions, considering jobs as automatable that “do not include any significant capacity of task flexibility, reactivity, problem solving, social interaction or human intuition” (Valenduc, 2017). This generates similar figures to the OECD angle, in between 10% and 15% (Conseil d’orientation pour l’emploi, 2017; Le Ru, 2016).

Assuming that the relationship of jobs and technologies can be shaped and is being shaped, this suggests that the respective capabilities of humans and “robots or algorithms should be used in a complementary rather than substitutive way, focusing on humans’ ability to behave smartly in non-structured situations and environments, be creative and intuitive, translate ideas into innovations, design strategies and manage human and social relations.

A challenge different from the number of jobs to develop or disappear consists in emerging changes in the employment relationship that may eventually threaten its basic components through new business models, platform capitalism and work “on demand”. Here, workloads, tasks and projects lose their relation to working hours; wages may become flexible and more market-based with the development of piece-rates, auction-based remuneration on platforms. Finally, the boundaries of employment versus self-employment are blurring with freelance logics developing among the employed or wage logics among the self-employed. Hence, the discussion needs to move beyond the question of “how many jobs” to the question of “what kind of jobs?”

4 Presentation 2: Irene Mandl (Eurofound) – New forms of employment and self-employment

Irene Mandl presented selected results from two studies conducted by Eurofound on “new forms of employment” (Mandl, Curtarelli, Riso, Vargas, & Gerogiannis, 2015) and on self-employment in Europe (Vermeulen, Wilkens, Biletta, & Fromm, 2017). New forms of employment in the report are defined by having newly emerged or increased their relevance since 2000 non-conventional workplaces, support by ICT with changes in the employment relationship, in work patterns and networking. This includes platform-based and other casual forms of work, work based on vouchers, mobile work and also employee or job sharing and interim management. These forms of work have varied positive or negative impacts on both the labour market and on working conditions, with job and employee sharing and

interim management having the most beneficial impact in both dimensions. The report on self-employment provides a typology that distinguishes between the more or less stable or vulnerable forms. Of the 32 million self-employees in Europe, 17% are considered vulnerable and 8% concealed, whereas a quarter of self-employed each are in stable freelance situations, are small traders or farmers, or are employers. The vulnerable and concealed self-employed are the group in which precarious or even “bogus self-employment” situations are found. 40% of them took up self-employment out of necessity and only 45% have more than one client. 63% of the vulnerable are in the lowest income quintile and on average they only work 29 hours per week. While self-employment clearly covers varied and also quite favourable modes of working, the situation of the vulnerably self-employed poses challenges to existing legislation, social protection and representation of this group (Mandl, 2017).

5 Working groups

5.1 *A-typical and precarious employment*

First some evidence on service labour markets in the participants' countries was gathered. This needed some clarification of the terminology. The group use the term “atypical” work for non-permanent contracts and talk about “precarious” work referring to the circumstances of life with low and unpredictable incomes, limited social security and the resulting inability of workers to make longer-term plans. In **Sweden** there are no signs of significantly increasing atypical employment. Still, younger people tend to work under more atypical contracts, often as steps towards regular employment. However, Sweden is a special case due to the country's highly regulated labour market, high influence of trade unions and social partners and overall strong economy. In the media sector there is an expansion of freelance work – where 15 years ago most people working in the sector were employees, now they are independent professionals specialising in different tasks.

In **Finland**, due to the negative economic development of the past years, the unemployment rate has been high. While now the economy is picking up, new possibilities are emerging, but employment growth is found mostly in part-time contracts rather than permanent ones. The government has been supporting all kinds of atypical employment forms due to the economic situation. Self-employment has grown, mainly in the construction sector and media/journalism. In media, a massive structural change occurred 4-5 years ago. The majority of employees ended up as freelancers, working for the same companies, but having less income and needing to take care of social security by themselves. The platform economy is not that big in Finland. UBER for example failed to establish itself since the “Taxi regulation” was strong. There was some mobilization on the part of taxi-drivers but the business will be deregulated again soon. This reflects a common contradiction between a sector's workers or incumbent businesses and consumers who would be happier to have cheaper taxis in Finland. Airbnb is present but has not disrupted the hotel sector much. Cleaning companies are also mainly platform based.

In **Italy** there are many self-employed workers (~20%). Ca. 2.8 million have a fixed-term contract (or are agency workers). The impact of digitalisation so far cannot be discerned from other influences so far. In **Bulgaria's** state-owned post office, currently 30% of the employees are working four hours a day involuntarily. The trade union density is 80% and non-members are also protected by the collective agreements. In the general Bulgarian labour market there are many highly skilled specialists in ICT and entire “outsourcing towns” have emerged with foreign direct investment by many US, European and Russian companies. For other service professions (such as journalism and also translators) European projects constitute a sizable part of the labour market but often also provide atypical employment. The questions of social security and representation of freelancers is not very developed in the country and there is no legislation so far, but it is a subject of the tripartite discussions. In **Germany** there is a „well-growing“ labour market with expanding rates of employment and even rising wages after a period of

wage stagnation. During the 1990s and 2000s, the labour market was liberalized and deregulated which lead to an increase in atypical employment. Germany has one of the biggest low wage sectors (more than 20%) among European countries. A statutory minimum wage was introduced in 2015 and is at € 8.80 gross). While regular employment is still dominant, atypical employment is growing and rapidly catching up. Many people work part-time, many 10-hours a week (mini jobs), and labour market deregulation brought a large growth in temporary work (1 Million workers). Again, the influence of digitalisation cannot be easily distinguished from that of the liberalisation policy, company restructuring or transnationalisation. Some new forms of self-employment such as crowd-working owe their existence to internet platforms, but this is not a large phenomenon so far. In Germany, **liberalisation** of postal services also had a clearly negative impact on working conditions. Although the state still has shares in the telecommunications and post companies, it does not use it for strategic purposes and most definitely is not expected to do so in order to prevent/regulate atypical employment or to support decent work. While the “Deutsche Post” is highly unionised, its competitors are not.

Irene Mandl, partaking in the discussion group offered her insights from the European and research perspective. According to her, it is difficult to **assess new developments** and pick-up on new and atypical forms of work from both labour market statistics and the European surveys run for example by Eurofound. Findings on emerging forms of working are thus mainly based on qualitative research. So only considering the newest (more atypical than atypical / „hyper-atypical“) forms of employment, some are very precarious, others less so (see Mandl et al., 2015). Others are considered an improvement to previous conditions.

Crowd employment is obviously an outcome of digitalisation. So far, the evidence suggests that most crowdworkers do it to gain some additional income or „pocket-money“, but a minority earns more of their income from platform work. ICT-based **mobile work** is defined as everything more mobile than tele-working, for example working on clients’ sites or while traveling. It also serves as a good example of atypical but not necessarily precarious employment, and some but not all mobile workers are mainly satisfied with it. Yet it raises some concerns, for example over long working hours or social isolation.

Based on this overview, the group gathered examples and ideas of favourable regulation and successful **practices of organizing atypical employment**. From the Finnish perspective, it is important to make sure competition law does not prevent the “bogus” self-employed from collective bargaining. For example, freelance journalists have been fighting for the **right to collective bargaining**. A “freelancer journalists’ cooperative” was also launched by a union, there has however not been further news around that. In Bulgaria there has been some organisation by nurses, taxi drivers, photographers and other freelancers in cooperatives through digital platforms – it is not collective bargaining per se but it seems to be an effective enough proxy. A representative from German ver.di’s unit organising the self-employed stressed the need for them to fight, make themselves heard, and demonstrate and experience their **collective power** – with the help of their respective organisation. It seems that in order to implement policies in their favour, politicians are asking where the demonstrations are. From the Swedish perspective there is the urgent necessity for trade unions to focus on potential members and become more relevant to people who today do not know why they should be member of a union. However for this to be achievable, with regard to the self-employed Sweden also needs a change of the current competition law. In that respect, ver.di together with IG Metall have taken advantage of digitalised solutions and –through their **own platforms** – offer advice to the self-employed. “You get answers and you get them fast – from colleagues, not professionals. People offering consulting have to be in the job themselves.” This service was not formed as a top down process, but “done by people themselves”, and it is widely considered as the kind of a political process that cannot succeed top-down. In ver.di this has

been a long process but meanwhile the self-employed are nowadays regularly consulted over the union's strategy development.

From the Finnish perspective, ensuring that atypical employment is not cheaper for the employer and thus leads to social dumping is one important task. The EC proposal to widen the scope of **social security** is a good initiative – providing an EU wide basis for access to social security irrelevant of the specific employment status. EU-level principles are needed for this to succeed, not forgetting the goal of **global standards**. The Italian representative also considered **minimal rights** as a matter that legislation should cover. However, not endangering regions and sectors with higher standards in the process is difficult, and unions must be more inclusive in order to achieve this. Italy is an example of very fragmented workforces by sector and employment status even in one workplace: agency workers dependent on the main company, cleaners, the company managing the site, people serving food (catering). All of these are organised in different categories and need to connect on the grounds of their common interest and possibly the workplace or place of service provision. The promotion of a Charter of universal rights of workers could provide a global vision.

All of this presents never-ending tasks for unions, and the group agreed that they need to consider what problems they can tackle themselves and what kind of tasks should be imposed on policymakers. Unions need to keep in mind that the goal is not to regulate precarious employment as such, but to avoid it by regulating atypical employment forms in the direction of “good” employment. For this purpose the working group summarised the following intermediary results, which should be considered by unions when developing their strategies:

- Restructuring of unions; inviting all (including the self-employed) and giving them the chance to a voice and representation. Help people to help themselves and thus empower them.
- Unions should take responsibility and partake in the discussion of what kind of society and what kind of life quality do people want to have and include this in their narrative.
- Use social media to organize campaigns, to provide explanations and a narrative, spread ideas and explain to the self-employed what rights they even have.
- Discuss extensively, what the EU should do; this could include minimum rights and protection for all despite their form of work, including the right to organise, training, social security etc. and according to that exert pressure wherever possible.

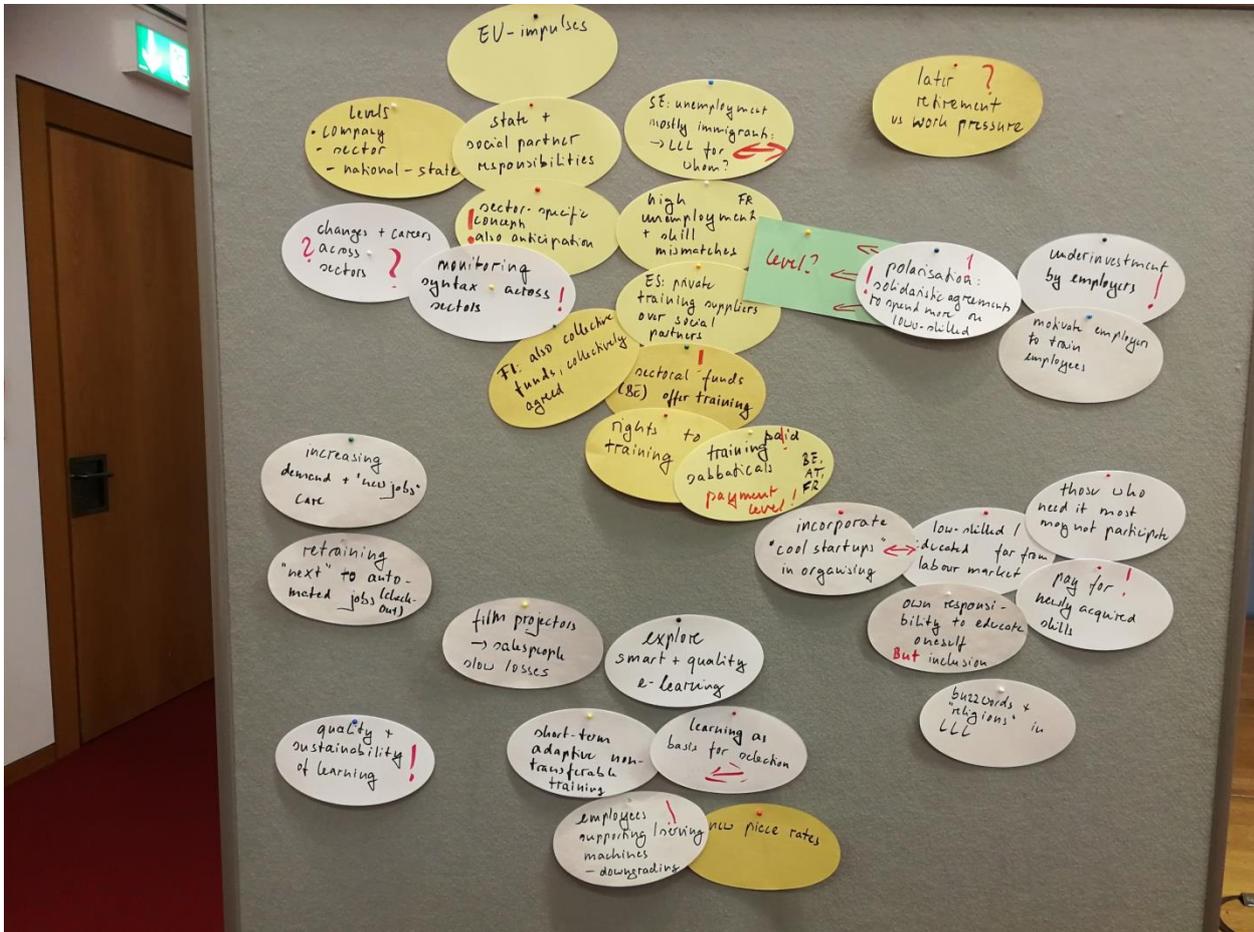
5.2 *Organising lifelong learning*

This working group documented its discussion on a pinboard, and the following notes are a reconstruction of the arguments from their visualisation.

Approaches to training and lifelong learning are shaped by both general present and future developments and those in the labour market of each country. We are generally seeing people retiring later but confronted with continuous technological and organisational change and also increasing work pressures. There is a general consensus over the necessity of lifelong learning, but also a proliferation of buzzwords and „religions“ around the subject. Nevertheless, employers still are found to **underinvest** into the training of their workforces and need to be motivated to train them. There is the well-known St Matthew's principle (from the Bible) in further education and training: „To those that hath, shall be given“, that means, the better skilled and educated are also more likely to be involved in further training. Vice versa, the **low-skilled** and poorly educated who would need the most training may not participate and are at higher risk of unemployment, underemployment and increasing detachment from the labour market. Indeed, where staffing levels decline, companies are being restructured and

performance appraisals are tightened, the **ability to learn** may become a criterion for the selection of employees for redundancy.

Figure 1: Organising life-long learning – results of the discussion



In Sweden, the working population is generally well involved in training and unemployment concentrates on immigrants. This raises the question for whom lifelong learning should be extended. France has higher unemployment and is challenged by frequent skill mismatches. In Belgium, France and Austria, there is the possibility of **training sabbaticals** in which some income replacement is paid – but the level of payments may not render a sabbatical affordable for everyone. Belgium, like Sweden and Finland has **sectoral funds** administered by the social partners that offer further training – a concept generally favoured by trade unions as social partners are likely to be better informed over skill needs and current requirements than other providers. Nevertheless, in Spain, recent legislation favours private-sector training suppliers over training provided by the social partners.

Hence, contexts and **responsibilities for learning** and training are unevenly distributed. Inevitably, individuals also have a responsibility to educate themselves, but this needs to be complemented by **rights** to training. With current distributions of skills and training collective actors must also address the question of access and **social inclusion**. Training can and should be provided on the company, sectoral and national level, and responsibilities shared by the state, individual companies and social partners. The EU can provide impulses and support innovation in training and the transfer of successful practices. Sector-specific concepts need to be developed also to include tools and methodologies for **anticipating**

and monitoring skill needs – but this monitoring should also extend across sectors as sectoral boundaries are often blurring and workers may need to plan and pursue their careers across sectors. Here, slow and incremental changes also need attention: for example, in digitalised cinemas film projection is widely automated and film projectors, a formerly skilled function, have become salespersons of popcorn or drinks.

Hence, social partners need to pay attention to the **quality and sustainability** of training. Good training should be distinguished from short-term adaptive and non-transferable training that does not improve perspectives. Training should counter the downgrading and deskilling of jobs through which employees become mere „servants“ of machines – and should support more holistic and quality-oriented ways of deploying new technology. Depending on the respective sectoral or cross-sectoral labour markets it can be oriented towards sectors of increasing demand and „**new jobs**“ (for example in health and care) or can take place „next to“ jobs that are being automated, providing **complementary skills** to the functions overtaken by machines.

Further concrete ideas and suggestions were

- In the face of polarising labour markets in which low-skilled work is expanding, to create solidaristic agreements that allow for higher spending on training for the lower-skilled.
- Generally, social partners need to assure that the newly acquired skills of their workforces are duly recognised and also paid.
- Smart and high-quality e-learning should be explored where its flexibility is also in favour of workers.
- Where appropriate, „cool startup“ companies and their training requirements could be incorporated in training.

On the pinboard, central and generally agreed suggestions were marked with a red **!**, open questions with a red **?**, and areas of tension within and between bullets with a red **↔**.

In conclusion, the group suggested that

- Human work should not be “like a machine” , jobs need to be redesigned along human strengths, keeping the job context flexible, ensuring that skills can also be used, and thus are rendered sustainable.
- Rights to training, sectoral funds and paid sabbaticals are good ideas.
- Social partners could promote solidaristic collective agreements over training that direct more funds and compensation to the low-skilled.

5.3 (Decent) employment relationships

Thus group also discussed ways for trade unions to include and represent self-employed workers as members and to collectively bargain for and with them. This requires a proper legal framework that recognises work as such on both the European and national levels and would provide a better basis for negotiations. The exchange and coordination of unions and mutual learning from good examples are also central. This group suggested to make training mandatory as this was deemed the only way of protecting unions’ own members and the future workforce in the digital era. “Fair” platforms run or accredited by unions were also a suggestion.

6 Plenary

The plenary discussion circled around the questions how unions can stay both relevant and attractive. The area of **training and learning** appears to be central to this and to provide opportunities for success.

The aims for unions should go beyond ensuring individuals' employability. Training and learning is also about limiting polarisation in the labour market and promoting **inclusion**, taking care that not only the already highly-skilled profit from such policies. Competence development and **capacity building** should create and increase options for workers to be active and employed in different areas. Funds to which the state and social partners contribute have been long discussed but are still considered useful. The social partners and not the state should decide on the distribution of funds and priorities. This is the more important as education and training are also new and expanding service markets and targets of European and national privatisation policies. Unions and workers, however, have an interest not to replace training by a marketplace, to retain the association of **higher skills and quality work** that allows workers to use and develop them. On the one hand, "Nordic" approaches to addressing learning and training may gain in importance in the future. On the other, the question remains where they can be extended into different national contexts or to the European level.

The emergence of platforms should be taken seriously and the roles of employees and employers clearly defined. Here, initiatives in different countries need to coordinate..

Another central question is the present and future **membership base**. This does not just affect the self-employed but the increasingly diverse groups of more or less precariously employed. Without neglecting traditional constituencies unions need to become more relevant and attractive to those groups of employees that are becoming more important. As the terms of work are changing, a change of approach would be to present trade unions as **modern dialogue partners**, taking into account flexibility needs but not letting go of certain principles. This applies not just to their position vis a vis the employer side but also to their own constituencies: people are adopting a different approach to work in general that can be described as more individualistic, creative, or "millennial", and these identities need to be taken seriously and addressed appropriately.

Institutionally, it is worth keeping in mind that social dialogue was an integral part of the European Model although it has not been achieved in all countries or even been rolled back. Unions need to remind the EU of this.

Finally, unions also need to gain ground in the more principled or even visionary parts of debates over digitalisation. How can they contribute to or even lead the discussion of what society we want to have. This requires the ability to also convey a **positive**, improved image of the **digital future**. There is an Intensive debate about "Postcapitalism" in which trade unions appear not to be participating. However, there would be ways of converting threats into opportunities. For example, automation would allow for a reduction of working hours to redistribute digital gains.

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