

High-Level International Conference

# Towards a Digitalized World of Work: What Future Works for All?

*In the context of the International Labour Organization's Centenary*

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**1st Plenary Session**

**25-26 April 2019**

*Hotel Crowne Plaza Vilnius*

*M. K. Čiurlionio 84, Vilnius, Lithuania*



Ministry of Social Security  
and Labour of the Republic  
of Lithuania

# 1<sup>st</sup> Plenary Session: How the use of new technologies will affect the future of work?

**Session outline:** This session will give a broad introduction to the various aspects of the world of work that will be affected by technological change. Five European and international organisations will briefly present the main trends and challenges in their area of work, before coming together in an interactive panel to discuss how these trends and challenges affect each other. The aim of the session is to set the stage and provide first glimpses at potential policy solutions. Following the plenary, the specific opportunities and challenges arising out of automation/robotisation and the emergence of the platform economy will be discussed in more detail in the parallel sessions.

**Context:** Technological change has the potential to both destroy and create jobs. As with previous industrial revolutions, we see a similar pattern of technophobes, fearful of the repercussions of automation, and technophiles, pushing full steam ahead to take advantage of productivity gains. The industrial revolution 4.0 will change what work can be automated, as fundamental advances in robotics, digitalization, artificial intelligence and nano-technology are applied in new sectors. Going forward, both manual and analytical jobs can be automated. Beyond the manufacturing sector, which was traditionally the epicentre of automation, automation will increasingly affect service industries as well. For example, tasks of doctors and police investigators that require processing data and making decisions could be automated in the near future. However, new jobs will also be created from this revolution, but to take advantage of these reskilling employees will likely be necessary. To date, education systems still reflect the assumption of a linear career path, making it challenging for individuals to cope with an increasing number of career breaks and shifts in direction.

Advances in technology not only change who works and on which tasks, but also how and where we will work in the future. The combination of robotics and AI can enable various previously unseen approaches to work that were hitherto limited by location and borders. It is not unthinkable that a surgeon residing in France could remotely perform surgery on a patient in Hungary. Moreover, AI through platforms can enable enterprises to find specialist workers on short notice from all over the world, vastly expanding their previous recruiting reach. It can also help to put expert teams together without having to overcome geographical dispersion. These developments can give more choice to some workers as well, although there is also a substantial risk that existing inequalities will further increase as the global economy increasingly shifts towards a winner-takes-all model. What is clear, is that this blurring of legislations and boundaries creates challenges that require new mechanisms to ensure decent work for all.

Technological changes affect work in all its parameters. To fully understand the impact, we need to understand how the employment relationship will be affected. With the emergence of new forms of employment, traditional welfare systems that have been built over the past two centuries are struggling to provide security and decent working conditions to all workers, thereby contributing to labour market segmentation. The boundaries between work and private life are also getting increasingly blurry, due to global 24-hour production cycles, digital communication technologies and the overall drastic increase in communication flows in the workplace.

By consequence, not only is the world of work affected, but so are our societies as a whole. Changes in people's work bring with them changes in their self-perception and changes in how people act within society. This has ramifications ranging from delayed and decreasing numbers of childbirth to how public discourse takes place and how our democracies function. The workplace as a point of connection and sociability is changing. Yet, this is not new, as the workplace has always been an arbiter of how our societies function.

Considering the vast reach of changes in the labour market, it is increasingly important that policymakers develop systemic solutions that can keep up with the speed of change of our time. Different policy areas and arenas cannot exist in vacuum anymore and other actors, such as civil society, workers' representatives and employers need to be more actively involved in the shaping and implementation of policy. Better mechanisms to represent the views of locals in increasingly global debates and economic systems need to be found, and technology might be part of the solution.

**The panellists will discuss the following issues:**

#### ***International Labour Organization***

- *Innovation in governance and labour legislation – what needs to be done and how could international labour standards help?*
- *Extending the role of social dialogue and tripartism - how to improve coverage and protection for workers in non-standard forms of employment, especially women and young workers?*
- *How can progress be made toward normative consistency across regimes of governance: international, regional and national; or, private and public?*

#### ***International Social Security Association***

- *What is the impact of the digital economy on social protection and how will it impact traditional social security institutions? How can systems adapt to deliver inclusive and adequate coverage?*

#### ***European Commission***

- *What policies might help for balancing work and family life? What role does the erosion of traditional employment relationships play in this regard?*
- *What policies are needed to ensure that individuals have the means to manage transitions throughout their working lives?*

#### ***European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions***

- *What are new forms of employment and how do they impact working conditions and the labour market as a whole? What are the implications for traditional protection mechanisms and how do these need to adapt to reflect new forms of employment?*
- *What role do new technologies play in the rise of new forms of employment?*

#### ***International Organisation of Employers***

- *How do education and training systems need to be transformed to equip the workforce with the skills and competencies required in the future? What is the role of business in equipping workers with these skills? How do interactions between the private sector and traditional education providers need to change to reflect the changing needs of the labour market?*
- *How can the current technological revolution be managed to improve the functioning of labour markets, strengthen inclusiveness and mitigate the consequences of job destruction?*
- *What benefits and challenges will the proliferation of non-standard forms of employment bring to individuals and workers?*