

The world(s) of work in transition

Conference report

—
ETUI-ETUC Conference
Brussels, 27-29 June 2018
Hotel Thon Europe, 1040 Brussels

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Table of contents

Introduction and summary	5
Plenary A – Global transitions and world(s) of work	7
Introduction	7
Welcome Speech by Luca Visentini - Building the future that we want	8
It is time to be innovative	9
Better quality jobs with strong social rights for a stronger economy.....	10
Unions will never give up on full employment.....	11
Do not rewrite the ILO's rules	12
We are sleep-walking back to disaster.....	13
No GPS system for the global economy	13
Keynote speech – Managing Europe's economic and social framework	15
A time of rapid change in the workplace.....	15
The EPSR as a framework for new laws.....	15
Getting the balance right in and out of work	16
Plenary B – When the rich and powerful pretend they do not need us	18
High finance and high tech are the new 'extractive' industries.....	18
Trade unions need to understand the new industrial revolution.....	19
The fight for rights.....	20
More power for the unions, more rules for high finance	21
Plenary C – Labour market composition and demographic change: can migrants and new technologies offset population ageing?	22
Migration and technology can help – but only in part.....	22
Countering the negative myths surrounding migration	23
Demographic change – a major challenge for the EU.....	24
EU initiatives to protect and integrate migrant workers	25
Visual harvesting	27
Plenary D – Climate change and the transition to a green economy: what does it mean for jobs	30
Europe working together on a sustainable policy.....	30
Post-industrial society still needs social protection	30
Higher Green targets	31
Identifying alternative jobs.....	32
Social protection and new ways of working.....	33
Plenary E – Digitalisation and the new economy, disrupting production networks while tackling climate change?	34
Digitalisation as a key development tool	34
Keynote speech: The European Commission's view of the future	34

Do more robots mean fewer jobs for humans?	35
Organising the un-organised.....	36
Safeguarding and nurturing the digital workplace	37
Plenary F – Globalisation and Europeanisation: European solutions for global problems?	38
European solutions for global problems	38
We need globalisation with European characteristics.....	38
Europe needs to be stronger on global issues	39
Local solutions to global problems	39
One size doesn't fit all.....	40
Keynote speech – Trade policy needs to be more value-based and inclusive.....	41
Trade needs rules	42
Plenary G – A new economic approach: what are the shortcomings of the current economic model, and how to fix them?.....	43
Mainstream economics isn't working: what can replace it?.....	43
The need to tackle the short-term nature of the capitalist system.....	43
A Universal Basic Income is a good start.....	44
Change the accounting system	44
Challenging the current economic model	45
End the "religion" of competition.....	46
Relinquishing control to make a profit.....	46
Young trade-unionists' discussion on managing transitions.....	47
Tackling the problems of the present with the policies of the past?.....	47
The search is on for new union members	49
Plenary H – Social dialogue: how can we create a common agenda for social europe?.....	50
What is our contribution to social Europe?	50
Social dialogue is essential	50
We need a social Europe	51
Europe must pay more attention to ILO Conventions.....	52
Change is both a challenge and an opportunity.....	52
Representing the unrepresented.....	53
One future	54
Executive summary.....	55
Prepare for the future with joined up responses.....	55

Introduction and summary

The third joint ETUI-ETUC conference, held at the Thon Europe Hotel in Brussels on 27-29 June 2018, saw over 500 delegates gather to debate the future of work. The aim of the conference was to analyse ongoing changes in the economy and labour markets in order to galvanise and inform trade unions and their allies in campaigning for justice at work.

Unlike previous ETUI-ETUC conferences, which had focused on specific themes such as digitalisation and automation, the ambition of the 2018 event was to discuss – together and in one place – four key ‘megatrends’ disrupting societies and economies:

- First, the free movement of capital, services and people are altering the allocation of jobs throughout the European internal market.
- Second, climate change and the energy transition are making many occupations obsolete, while at the same time creating new ‘green’ jobs in emerging sectors and industries.
- Third, the demographic transition is changing the structure of the labour force and challenging social security systems.
- Fourth, the digitalisation of the economy is set to disrupt the processes of production, employment and work conditions on an unprecedented scale.

The tendency so far has been for these transitions to be studied and reflected upon independently from one another. As a result, conclusions about what the future holds, and the ensuing policy recommendations, vary according to the transition in question. The aim of the conference organisers was therefore to put the different projections together and analyse them in tandem in order to fully understand the multiple and complex consequences for the world of work.

Over the three days of the conference delegates heard from world-renowned experts and policymakers in ten plenaries and keynote speeches and took part in 20 panel discussions that focused on key policy challenges. Speakers were encouraged to debate with the audience and several panels were explicitly interactive in, for example, the way they explored ideas on scenario-building, and how trade union educators can use visuals to explore change. Young trade unionists were also given the chance to air their views on managing the transitions in a way that addressed increasing job precarity.

To help delegates absorb all this information, the conference employed several enhanced learning techniques. These included a ‘theme-weaver’ to summarise key lessons from each day of the conference, as well as ‘visual harvesting’ by artists sitting on the discussions and presenting the ideas in simple graphic images.

Throughout the conference the emphasis was always on coming up with practical policy solutions that addressed one or more of the megatrends simultaneously. While the ensuing discussions did not yield a policy blueprint for managing change, they kickstarted a lively debate that will be continued at the ETUC Conference in May 2019 and over the coming years.

Plenary A Global transitions and world(s) of work

Introduction



Philippe Pochet

Philippe Pochet, General Director of the European Trade Union Institute (ETUI) and chair of the introductory plenary, welcomed participants to the conference with a call to address head-on the four ‘megatrends’ of climate change, digitalisation, globalisation (Europeanisation) and shifting demographics. Together, these megatrends were transforming societies and economies across the globe, with profound consequences for the organisation of work, while also presenting new challenges for trade unions in representing worker’s interests.

In explaining this ambition, Pochet said that researchers tend to address one big challenge at a time, often in isolation from the others. But, he pointed out, “we have just one joint future”, so the conference discussions need to interlink those megatrends. Will all these changes create one new world of work, or many? How can trade unions engage with these developments and what strategies are there to cope with them? Moreover, he reminded participants, it is important that we understand these forces now, because we are the actors of the future. “We can decide the path that we want to follow, but only if we understand the challenges and if we act together”, Pochet said.

Setting out the programme to come, he explained that the first day would draw the big picture, setting out the perspective of the different institutions and how they see the main challenges. The second day would look at how to link up responses to meet the challenges while day three was about action: what can be done collectively for a better future?

Handing over to **Luca Visentini**, General Secretary of the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC), he said that the goal of the opening session would be to give an overview of the challenges we face.

Welcome Speech by Luca Visentini – Building the future that we want



Luca Visentini

Visentini began his welcome speech by saying that a great tradition was being established in coming together every two years to discuss the burning issues of the day, and what they mean for our future. The mega-trends that Pochet had just described were enormous challenges for everyone: trade unions, civil society organisations and the EU institutions. He noted that one of the first speakers in that morning's panel would be Effie Achtsioglou, Minister of Labour for Greece, a country which is facing some of the worst effects of the global crisis in Europe.

Visentini then set out what he saw as four key words for panellists to address.

The first was 'rhetoric': "We face two main wrong rhetorics that are often dangerous and biased", he said. The first of these is the erroneous idea that all progress is positive, bringing only opportunities from which all will benefit. Visentini urged the conference to challenge the simplistic notion that upskilling alone will solve everything, because while new skills are important they do not address the side effects of the changes we face.

"The megatrends are enormous challenges for everyone: trade unions, civil society organisations and the EU institutions."

But, equally, he also said that we must not embrace the language of fear, and the idea that change will only bring disaster. While there may be some justification for caution we must always look for solutions and hope for the future, otherwise we allow populism to win. In particular, we must not fall into the trap of portraying a trade union movement that is always opposed to change.

'Ethics' was another key word that Visentini wanted to emphasise. Globalisation, financialisation and now digitalisation were all processes which were being managed and designed to meet the needs of business, while the human dimension of change has been forgotten. Change must be used to improve people's lives, and there must be equality for citizens, workers and consumers so they can also contribute to and benefit from change.

Thirdly there is 'transition', which trade unions must help shape. We must manage transition now, to create the world we want, and not just react to change after it happens. That means putting in place governance that helps workers and people, both economic and political governance, with regular dialogue, bringing new and better opportunities.

"Change must be used to improve people's lives...We must not fall into the trap of portraying a trade union movement that is always opposed to change."

And finally, the 'future' – what is the world of work that we want to build? We must challenge the fake rhetoric about insiders and outsiders, and the idea that trade unions just want to protect their own. But, Visentini insisted, to protect the outsiders we cannot destroy the rights of the insiders – we must extend those rights and protections to all. To do that we need effective social dialogue "to build the Europe we want."

It is time to be innovative



Effie Achtsioglou

Effie Achtsioglou, the Greek Minister of Labour, Social Solidarity and Social Security, said she knew all too well the failings of the neo-liberal approach. Structures to protect workers had been dismantled in the last two decades, and European economic integration had not gone hand in hand with the harmonisation of our social systems.

Picking up on Visentini's point about outsiders and insiders, she recalled that when she was in negotiations on behalf of Greece, creditors such as the IMF had called for protections for insiders to be dismantled to allow outsiders

greater access to the system. But that did not work. Cutting workers' wages in Greece after the crisis did not lead to economic growth, it led to a humanitarian crisis, with 28% unemployment and in-work poverty due to low wages.

Our systems will have to adapt to meet future demands but there are no easy answers, she warned. We must take lessons from the past when deregulation was too strong and find intervention policies that make more sense.

Re-establishing rights, such as collective bargaining, will not be enough on its own. The issue of posted workers has shown the weakness of the European system in dealing with globalisation and the free movement of people and capital. Young workers often find themselves in the black economy, while migrant workers frequently have no rights.

"We need binding collective bargaining at the European level."

Rights are needed for all those vulnerable workers who never had protection. It is time to make the invisible workers visible, so they can claim labour and social rights and take part in the new model.

The race to the bottom has created a new reality in the labour world. We need a vision, a new project, and trade unions must find a different strategy to face the new capital model, she said. We must also work across borders at the international level, because trade unions are still confined by borders, while capital is not. Now we need a race to the top for working conditions and binding collective bargaining at the European level. Even the OECD now recognises the need to support collective bargaining.

There is no EU minimum standard on worker representation, as yet, so an amendment may be needed to the European Works Council Directive, and ultimately perhaps a framework Directive that applies to all levels of European company law.

Some of the themes were developed in panel discussions which followed. The need for Europe-wide bargaining was also highlighted in later discussions in Panel 1 on inclusive growth. There were concerns however that systems still varied too widely from one country to the next and that the tendency was still to keep bargaining national. Panel 3 on company mobility noted that the Social Pillar points to convergence, except on workers' participation, suggesting there is divergence between different parts of the Commission.

Better quality jobs with strong social rights for a stronger economy



Rudy De Leeuw

Rudy De Leeuw, ETUC President, argued that, when it comes to the future of work, one of the biggest concerns policymakers face is youth unemployment. He said that policymakers need to move away from defensive policies to ones that restore hope. But that responsibility lies with Member States, not only the European Institutions. Europe needs a new project that demonstrates added value for its citizens, especially youth. It must prove it can respond to new forms of work converting industries to create quality jobs for all.

He stressed the need for a positive approach to fighting social inequality, including welcoming migrants – reminding us of the regrettable position of many European countries. A positive approach also meant looking on climate change as an opportunity, not just a challenge. It is an opportunity to create new, better quality jobs, with better pay and better social rights. To do that we must strengthen social dialogue and collective bargaining.

De Leeuw implored that delegates remember that it is the countries that have strong rights, strong bargaining and strong wages that are best at fighting inequality and have the best competitive edge and best productivity.

"We need to redirect budgets and create new financing models for a transition to benefit everyone."

The Social Pillar adopted in Gothenburg in 2017 shows that Europeans acknowledge the need for strong social rights. It is a roadmap to move away from austerity, restore workers' confidence in the European project and to create high quality jobs. However, for it to be effective, its principles must be converted into law, with a budget to support the measures.

He also called for a new framework that serves the real economy, noting that of the 2,200 billion euros raised by the European Central Bank (ECB), only 11% went to the real economy while the rest has fed speculation. Climate change needs to be tackled, and the next Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF – the Commission's budget proposals) should be an opportunity to move to a low carbon economy.

We are on the threshold of an historic transition away from austerity and neo-liberalism. We also have the UN 2030 Agenda that aims to eradicate poverty and guarantee human rights and create prosperity for all. That means creating sustainable jobs, compatible with climate objectives, greater social rights for workers, stronger collective bargaining with an upwards wage convergence and an end to social dumping.

De Leeuw also pointed out that we need investment in training, in innovation, in new jobs. And transition must be affordable for small and medium-sized enterprises, for local regions and cities engaged in the fight against climate change. Public services require significant investment and must remain in the public sphere to maintain accessibility.

Europe is part of the solution and can make a difference if it provides answers to the social, environmental and economic equation of sustainable development. Trade union action should be both European and global to meet these challenges.

Sustainable jobs were also discussed in Panel 4 on employment forecasts. Panellists concluded that further training is needed to switch from declining jobs to growing jobs. While there is scope for the creation of green jobs it depends, said participants, on good complementary industrial policies, and appropriate labour market policies capable of bringing more people into employment.

Unions will never give up on full employment



Sharan Burrow

Sharan Burrow, General Secretary of the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC), said that we cannot face our challenges – climate change, the displacement of people, technological change – without looking at all of them together.

She expressed her shock at hearing a representative of Business Europe defending the old business model just the day before, showing how out of step they were. Most of the business community understands the old model no longer works, and fear for their own survival in the face of giants like Amazon that are getting too big to control.

“We have a fractured workplace with insecure work, informality, digital business and modern slavery”, she insisted, but added that unions will never give up on full employment. And to begin with we need a new social model, where businesses need a social licence to operate.

She agreed with De Leeuw that governments must take responsibility in facing these challenges. As we look at our economic future we must look at energy shift, new forms of economic activity and automation, which is both an opportunity and a risk.

Technology can be positive – it is creating new industries, new jobs and a better environment helping to reduce emissions in the processing of materials, while Europe is taking the lead in ending single use plastics and driving innovation. Referring to the changes caused by shifts in technology, Burrow pointed out that the problem is not the technology, but the business model: we cannot, she said, accept the passivity of governments in the face of platform industries.

“Unions are calling for just transition, including secure pensions, income support and investment in jobs.”

The courts, Burrow continued, have rejected applications by platform workers to be classified as employees on the grounds of their flexible hours, so part of the solution must be to remove the notion that flexible hours means self-employment.

Also, on the theme of insiders and outsiders, Burrow said the unions can and are organising, to protect insiders and bring in outsiders, such as Uber drivers. Competition policy must change, so that it does not constrain collective bargaining. Looking to the future, there are four principles to bear in mind: 1) human deployment of technology; 2) human control of data; 3) human control of mediation with proper grievance mechanisms; and 4) universal social protection, including a minimum wage and collective bargaining.

Finally, on the question of migrants and refugees, she insisted – as an Australian, a country built on migration – that it is a simple question of humanity. Everyone deserves equal rights and equal treatment.

Discussion of the platform economy continued during the panels. In Panel 5, on the impact of digital change on job quality, **Valerio De Stefano** of the Catholic University of Leuven said that in many cases the self-employed should be re-classified as employed. The self-employed do not have same protection, often do not have access to unions, do not have the right to collective bargaining and therefore have no say in their compensation.

Do not rewrite the ILO's rules



Pierre Habbard

Pierre Habbard, General Secretary of the Trade Union Advisory Committee (TUAC) to the OECD, outlined the tough challenges ahead for workers from outsourcing and automation. He warned the conference that technological change will cause 14% of jobs to disappear in the next 20 years, while another 40% will change.

Technology means employers can outsource more than ever, but that can be disastrous, he pointed out, as Boeing's Dreamliner project showed. Boeing outsourced too much and lost control of key aspects of production. The new business model also creates a serious mismatch in economic and employment relationships. OECD figures show that 90% of crowd work, for example, is commissioned by developed countries, but 80% of the work is done in emerging economies.

If technology means everything can be outsourced, he asked, where are the boundaries? Who are firms accountable to? "We need employment contracts, as the first line of defence for workers." Nor, he added, should we forget that digital disruption also affects data and tax regulation, working time, work-life balance etc.

We are living with broken social models, with risk shifted from the employer to the worker, and rising inequality taking us back to the level of 1930s. Three out of four jobs created in the EU are in below-average productivity sectors. The private sector is not playing its role as the engine of growth. For example, business investment should be booming, but is not, because firms are hoarding profits for share dividends and share buy-backs.

In short, his three messages were: 1) we must anticipate and understand change; 2) fix regulations for work and companies; and 3) move away from the individualisation of risk.

The response of the OECD to the future work challenge has for a long time been skills, skills, skills – plus a social safety net. Its position has improved lately, however. The new blueprint for reform adopted two weeks before the conference recommends the minimum wage as a powerful tool and recognises that extended collective bargaining coverage is a good thing. The OECD has also taken a new position on due diligence and believes that employer responsibility should cover the global supply chain when they outsource.

"We need to maintain pressure to redress disrupt new business models."

OECD and G7 are saying", Hubbard warned. For every positive OECD recommendation, such as recognising collective bargaining, there is a contrary one cutting regulation for business. He ended by saying that we need new rules rather than rewriting the rules set by the ILO many years ago.

But more needs to be done, to tackle shareholder models and value worker participation. "We must not be too optimistic about what the

We are sleep-walking back to disaster



Guy Ryder

In light of the interventions of the previous speakers, **Guy Ryder**, Director General of the International Labour Organisation (ILO), proposed that instead of delivering his prepared speech on the Future of Work initiative, he would respond to what he had heard.

For successful transition, he said, we needed to know where we were going. That destination has been set out by the international community in the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, signed

by 193 countries, with goals covering equality, rights, migration and decent work, among others. The European and international trade union movement subscribe to those goals.

Today we are at a moment of maximum economic, social and political danger, he warned, in Europe because of austerity policies, and globally because of three or four decades of globalisation that has depressed labour incomes in many industrialized countries. We are reaping the harvest of injustice, of a lack of opportunity, and of a sense of unfairness, which has led to anger and a rejection of the mainstream political discourse. People are searching for something different and this is where we must situate our debate.

If we are not careful, we could witness the destruction of the multilateral system. The rhetoric in the political arena today is straight from the 1930s, the last time the multilateral system was destroyed. The ILO is the only surviving institution from that time.

"We are reaping the harvest of injustice, of a lack of opportunity, and of a sense of unfairness, which has led to anger and a rejection of the political discourse. People are searching for something different and this is where we must situate our debate."

The danger signs are there: we have seen the US withdrawal from the Paris climate change agreement and just last week from the UN Human Rights Council. The withholding of funding for multilateral humanitarian activity heralds dramatic times for multilateral cooperation.

No GPS system for the global economy

Having established our destination, we need to work out how to get there. There is no GPS system for the political economy, however. And the roadmaps set out by those who want to rid us of our public institutions, saying they are the problem, are leading to a dead end. So, we must build our own roadmap.

In the ILO, said Ryder, we have established the Global Commission to undertake the Future of Work initiative, and we will be publishing our report in January next year. The policies that we apply to the world of work must address the challenges that we have identified today, such as climate change and digitalisation. And he agreed with Visentini that it had to be a value-led operation, an ethical exercise.

The ILO was founded 100 years ago after the carnage of the 1st World War, Ryder concluded. Now we have the strongest imperative to action because, at the moment, like then, “we are sleepwalking back to disaster”.

Keynote speech Managing Europe's economic and social framework



Luca Visentini and Valdis Dombrovskis

In the first keynote speech of the conference **Valdis Dombrovskis**, Vice President of the European Commission responsible for the euro and social dialogue, acknowledged that there are risks in involving social partners in managing economic transition – as dialogue can sometimes lag labour market changes. Nevertheless, he affirmed that trade unions were important as they have their finger on the pulse of society in the world of work.

A time of rapid change in the workplace

Introducing Dombrovskis, ETUC General Secretary and Chair of the session **Luca Visentini** reminded his guest that trade unions are pushing for more representation for social partners at the European Commission.

Setting the tone for many other speakers over the coming two days, Vice-President Dombrovskis responded by noting some of what he saw as the key challenges to come. “It is becoming increasingly difficult to track work-related income, to detect an employer, to distinguish between employment contracts and contracts for services, between personal assets and business assets, or to pinpoint the location of work done”, he said.

Dombrovskis painted the background of rapid change in the workplace. Ten years ago, to give one example, 33 million Europeans worked part time, today that figure is 44 million. He called for progressive change to make transitions a success for all.

The EPSR as a framework for new laws

Dombrovskis said that the European Pillar of Social Rights “provides a framework for future-proofed laws and institutions at EU and national level. Together with social partners and Member States, we need to strengthen our efforts to make the European social model fit for the challenges of the 21st century”.

The Vice-President painted a picture of the overall EU economy as he saw it. He said the EU was in its sixth consecutive year of growth, employment was at record levels, the share of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion was back at pre-crisis levels and the Commission was therefore



Valdis Dombrovskis

"The European Pillar of Social Rights provides a framework for future-proofed laws and institutions at EU and national level."

Commission has set up the Digital Skills and Jobs Coalition – together with Member States, companies, and education institutions – pledging to tackle the lack of digital skills.

His second area of action was social security coverage. In most Member States social protection systems are still largely geared towards full-time open-ended work contracts, while the new work model might mean people typically have more than ten job changes in a lifetime. The Commission had proposed a 'Recommendation on access to social protection', which pushed for an extension of social protection to groups in the labour market that are currently not covered by Member States' systems. The Recommendation aimed to do away with formal coverage gaps by making sure workers and the self-employed in comparable conditions could adhere to corresponding social security systems and facilitating the transfer of social security entitlements from one job to the next.

His third area of action was protecting workers' rights and improving working conditions under changing circumstances. He called for all workers, including those on atypical contracts, to have clear information on their rights and obligations, from day one on the job. The Commission has proposed a Directive on Transparent and Predictable Working Conditions to ensure the rights of workers, in particular the most vulnerable ones, he said. Once this is adopted it will be a good starting point for social partners to get around the table and discuss the best application in each country and sector.

Getting the balance right in and out of work

The Commission also has a proposal on the Work-Life Balance for Working Parents and Carers to help ease the tension between the two spheres. "With this initiative, we aim to modernise the existing EU legal framework in the area of family-related leave and flexible working arrangements", he said.

"Together with social partners and Member States, Europe needs to work together to make the European social model for for the challenges of the 21st century."

Finally, he referred to EU funds which can help Member States, citing the new European Social Fund plus, with up to 101 billion euros in funding, as an instrument to address EU social challenges of today and tomorrow, including those arising from automation and new forms of work. He also hoped the revised European Globalisation Adjustment Fund, with a proposed budget of 1.6 billion

designing policy responses to update its legal and policy framework to fit future realities.

He outlined six areas of action starting with education, which he said was, not by coincidence, principle number one of the Pillar. Given that in the future four out of five new jobs would be high skilled, he said the future work environment "will demand more autonomy, less routine, more use of ICT, reduced physical effort and increased social and intellectual tasks."

He said the Commission, based on the Skills Agenda, was working with Member States and social partners on what he called 'concrete goals'. To achieve these shared goals, the

euros, would aid responses to the profound social changes brought about by ‘shifts and shocks’ in the global economy.

He concluded by talking about the role he hoped the social partners would have in these proposed changes. He noted that collective bargaining coverage has declined, sometimes dramatically, since the start of this century in nineteen EU Member States, and trade union membership differs greatly across countries – from 70% in Denmark to below 20% in most EU countries.



“Europe’s social model has been one of the success stories of Europe’s past.”

In this context, he reminded that the Commission has launched the ‘New Start for Social Dialogue’ and enshrined the principle of social dialogue into the European Pillar of Social Rights. He said he wanted to continue reinforcing social dialogue and improving the capacity of social partners at all levels as they were such a key part of the changes facing the world of work.

Dombrovskis concluded by saying that “Europe’s social model has been one of the success stories of Europe’s past. I know we can count on social partners to make sure that its future is equally bright.”

Visentini, the Chair, concluded the session saying that, although he accepted that national unions are opposed to it, and that EU Member States have different legal frameworks, there should be an EU dimension to collective bargaining rather than simply meaningless declarations.

Plenary B

When the rich and powerful pretend they do not need us

Western economies were in the grip of high finance – large banks and other financial institutions – which no longer served the interests of societies or even their economies, and were responsible for the financial crisis, argued Professor **Saskia Sassen** of Columbia University, the world-renowned sociologist and author of the book ‘Expulsions’.

High finance and high tech are the new ‘extractive’ industries



Saskia Sassen

Professor Sassen began her plenary keynote by describing the financial system as “the monster you have to deal with”. Summarising the research in her book ‘Expulsions’, she gave a series of examples of the way the current financial system works simply for the benefit of finance.

The modern ‘predatory formations’ are dressed in Wall Street suits using algorithmic maths, she said. High finance is about ‘grabbing’ and algorithms, and no longer about economics, she said, and yet its practitioners are admired. The back room of Goldman Sachs, which used to be occupied by secretaries is now full of former physicists.

We in the West have undergone a massive transformation since the 80s, resulting from privatisation and other related changes, she said. High finance should be seen as what she called an ‘extractive’ industry. Developing this theme, she suggested that, in the banking sector, high finance effectively has nothing to do with money or economics – it is purely extractive. An example of this is the way companies make money out of student debt in the US which is currently valued at a trillion dollars.

Using the example, of her own country, the US, she said that after a certain point, the unemployed in the US don’t get noticed. The long-term unemployed person in the US ceases to exist in the eyes of the law, adding that she thought this is probably untrue in Europe.

“We in the West have undergone a massive transformation since the 80s, resulting from privatisation and other related changes.”

Finance is also secretive, she said. Ben Bernanke, the former Chairman of the US Federal Reserve, had said there were ‘dark pools’ of financial activity whose value was greater than the transactions that are known about.

Banks lending locally helps the local economy, she said, but typically foreign banks were making money out of household debt. In the case of Eastern Europe, loans tended to be from German, Austrian and Swiss banks. Debt had shot up in the emerging markets such as Hungary, India, the Czech Republic and Thailand in the years up to the financial crisis, while in developed economies like Germany, in comparison, debt had remained stable.

Sassen called for change in the discourse when thinking about 'localism', as intermediate sectors, such as franchises, make profits from local consumers. "Do I need multinationals to have a coffee in my neighbourhood? No. Do I need multinationals to have a computer? Yes, probably," she said.



Developing this theme, Sassen argued that the extractive sector (which included Google, Facebook and high finance in general) can also make money from moderate income households. House mortgages for modest households were 'more money for large finance houses as they are now not really mortgages, they are algorithms. This sort of power is way beyond Facebook', she said. While the European economy had some resilience to some of this change, it could hit India, for example, with more disastrous results.

Self-serving finance also rules the property market. Empty buildings make profits as they are 'financialised' – they are just assets in algorithmic mathematics. The biggest owner of land in Central London is the Qatari royal family, although the system for making this public is not transparent.

Millions of workers were thrown out during the crisis, but the graphs showing corporate assets only suffered a blip. She gave a positive example of resistance to these financial practices from the Netherlands. Rather than pay 6% of their pensions to various financiers each taking one per cent, the Dutch had managed to get pension fees *down* to 3% by cutting down on financiers and their fees, meaning the Dutch pensioners all got a bit more money.

In closing, Sassen suggested that to solve the problems she had highlighted new laws and new legal instruments to control finance were probably necessary.

Trade unions need to understand the new industrial revolution



Yannis Panagopoulos

In the discussion that followed, there was broad agreement that high finance was a problem for societies, although not necessarily a consensus about what to do.

Responding to the questions thrown up by Sassen's talk, **Yannis Panagopoulos**, President of the Greek Confederation of Labour, said that some people think this is the end of the world of work, but he disagreed with them. Echoing Sassen, he said the financial elite control the world of finances, and they are 'grabbing' its fruits in what he called parasite capitalism. His country had paid a high price with unprecedented austerity measures.

When people say there is no alternative to austerity, weakened unions, wage freezes and so on, unions need to have answers for politicians who are in favour of a neo-liberal ideology, he said.

Greece had not been affected by the fourth industrial revolution and the arrival of the platform economy yet, but it was time to prepare for it. That meant understanding the conditions of this new revolution and the ideology behind it. It also meant looking at digitalisation and whether it would lead to social progress and better well-being. Trade unions needed to understand the implications of these developments and ensure that they lead to improved working conditions and social justice, and the way to do that is through social dialogue.

“Unions need to have answers for politicians who are in favour of a neo-liberal ideology.”

The Greek finance ministry had virtually ended social dialogue, however. Over the last four years Greece has not had a meeting between the government and the unions. What we need now, he said, is a renewal of social dialogue in Greece to bring convincing answers to our workers. A question he felt trade unionists should ask was “do we think digitisation is going to lead to social progress?”

The fight for rights



Inga Ruginiene

Would civil society rebel of its own accord against the extractive economy? **Inga Ruginiene**, President of Lithuanian trade union confederation, cautioned that the political situation in her country made mass protest against the unfairness described by Sassen unlikely. Lithuanians are happy with their recent 2% wage rise so “there is no protest from the people.”

The Lithuanian government had worked with the banks to ensure that workers pay less taxes, but she felt this gave the banks an element of control of the financing of this situation. The outlook was difficult as in her view people did not realise, for example, that their hard-earned money is going into private pension funds. So, nobody knows what is happening to that money, and they have no control over it. In spite of this, she described the public in Lithuania as “totally inactive”.

The Lithuanian government had worked with the banks to ensure that workers pay less taxes, but she felt this gave the banks an element of

Nevertheless, she felt that the conference had been very useful as she would be meeting the Lithuanian government the next day, as the Lithuanian trade union leader, and she would be able to put some of the points she had heard at the conference to their government.

In answer to Visentini’s question on what action should be taken she said we have to make the invisible, visible to get people to fight for their rights. This meant getting people to understand the financial situation portrayed by Sassen, and then getting them to work with the unions to fight for their rights.

“We need to get people to understand the financial situation, and then get them to work with the trade unions to fight for their rights.”

More power for the unions, more rules for high finance



Carmelo Barbagallo

Carmelo Barbagallo, General Secretary of Italy's Unione Italiana del Lavoro, continued in the same vein, pointing out that 5% of people are getting 50% of the world's wealth. The scale of the problem is growing, with sections of the middle classes now also becoming increasingly impoverished.

The financial crisis has had a huge impact on everyone, he argued, forecasting that wages will become more variable, and reminding the Conference that multinationals are involved in dumping, and that when they do this, it is workers who are the losers.

Technology has a social impact and we cannot stop its progress. Instead, trade unions must figure out how to reorganise work. When people had seen globalisation coming, they had not foreseen that it would need regulation, he said. This time must be different.

Although not a revolutionary, Barbagallo agreed with Sassen's diagnosis of the problem and believed that the only way to curb excessive financialisation was more powerful trade unions and more rules for the financial system. Facing increasingly liberalising trends, trade unions must get stronger and should support Sassen's call for appropriate rules that tackled the issues she raised. This means, firstly, for regulators to tackle dumping arranged between multinational corporations and, secondly, to identify companies requiring regulation.

Barbagallo also pointed to a long-term problem for national governments caused by technological change which is that, when a higher proportion of work is done by robots, revenue problems emerge for a country's Ministry of Finance as we can't tax robots.

He felt that the situation the Professor Sassen had described had led to war in earlier situations. Everyone should get together and be active at the EU level and that we should take to the streets.

He called on people at the Conference to unite and work to changing our worsening situation, "we should all get involved, irrespective of our national situations", he declared.

Plenary C Labour market composition and demographic change: can migrants and new technologies offset population ageing?

Migration and technology can help – but only in part

The question of whether two of the megatrends under discussion – migration and new technologies – could offset the labour-market impact of ageing populations was the focus of Plenary C.



Stijn Broecke

"If we lose our skilled population through ageing, we may be able to replace some workers through automation but there is only so much that automation can do."

Stijn Broecke, senior economist leading the Future of Work initiative at the OECD, kicked off the session by pointing out that the OECD population is ageing so fast that by 2050 the dependency ratio will have doubled. This throws up a serious policy challenge, because we are losing skills as older generations retire. So how can technology and migration help?

Migration can certainly boost the workforce. In Europe migration has accounted for 90% of the increase in the working population over the last ten years. It has brought in high skilled workers and a higher fertility rate, helping increase the future population. All of this helps boost economic growth, so it is positive on balance.

That boost is temporary however, warned Broecke. Migrants age too, and they integrate, which in turn affects fertility. Furthermore, the skills of migrants are often not the same as those retiring from the workforce. They tend to be polarised between high and low skills.

We can use policy to attract tertiary educated migrants to the EU to ensure a highly skilled workforce, but that has its limitations. Also, he pointed out, in addition to attracting skills we must put them to good use and recognise the skills that migrants bring, which we often fail to do. We should help migrants develop skills, with language training, vocational training and on-the-job training, so they can integrate.

Technology, like migration, can also help to a limited extent. Around 40% of jobs are at high risk of automation. If we lose our skilled population through ageing, we may be able to replace some workers through automation – we have seen the use of robots notably in Germany and Japan – but

there is only so much automation can do. Robots do routine jobs, the entry level jobs that young workers do, but the older workers who retire have often acquired soft skills that robots cannot do.

So, migration and technology can address future challenges, but only in part. We need to plan ahead for the new skills workers will have to acquire, providing life-long learning for that to happen.

In the ensuing discussion, it was pointed out from the floor that if people are replaced by robots, then robots will not be paying into the pension system. While Broecke didn't reject the idea of a 'robot tax' outright, he argued that there may be other solutions, including a higher rate of corporate tax.

Later on, in Panel 12 on automation and health and safety, another drawback of automation was highlighted. The failure to consult workers on the design of machines meant that they were not always fit for the job and could present a safety risk. Automation should therefore be part of social dialogue.

Countering the negative myths surrounding migration



Olivier De Schutter

Olivier De Schutter, Professor of Law at the University of Louvain, highlighted the challenges that migration is facing from populist policies in Europe. The popular narrative is that Europe must protect itself from migrants because they take our jobs, so we need to understand the arguments and find a response, he argued.

Third country nationals account for about 20 million people, only about 4% of the total population of the EU. The mass influx of migrants in 2015, many of whom were fleeing the crisis in Syria, pushed migration high up the agenda, but the numbers have been falling since then.

Another negative myth surrounding migration is that they are a 'drain' on public finances. In fact, a 30-year study in France showed that immigrants do not weigh significantly on public finance, principally because they tend to be younger, with a high proportion of people of working age.

Another classic belief is that migrants drag wages down, but again studies show that that is not the case. A study in France on the impact of migration on the labour market showed an increase in wages and jobs. As migrants arrived local workers moved up to higher paid jobs, thanks to training and new opportunities. Furthermore, France has minimum wage legislation and strong centralised collective bargaining

EU policy has always been one of non-discrimination, but migrants remain a largely untapped potential. Immigration can be a potential if immigrants are supported by access to education, training and employment, if social mobility is guaranteed, if there is strong collective bargaining, and if discrimination is prohibited. Fortunately, third country nationals in the EU are protected, thanks to EU directives on discrimination, jurisprudence concerning labour rights, EU association, partnership and cooperation agreements, and the 2011 Qualification Directive on international protection.

"Immigration can be a potential asset if immigrants are supported by access to education, training and employment, if social mobility is guaranteed, if there is strong collective bargaining, and if discrimination is prohibited."

Finally, he warned of what happens if we do not make the most of the potential of migrant workers and fail to treat them equally, pointing to the fact that widespread racial inequality is one key reason why in the United States, the socialist movement never grew beyond the fringe. It is easier to make migrants the scapegoats rather than improve working conditions. The rationale is that if the migrant workers are always worse off, then local workers always have someone below them on the ladder, creating passivity and discouraging mobilization for social justice.

Demographic change – a major challenge for the EU



Claude Rolin

Claude Rolin, MEP, Group of the European People's Party (EPP), argued that demography was a key challenge for the EU. Its 500 million inhabitants currently represent 7% of the world population, but by the end of century that will have fallen to 4%.

He divided the issue into four main areas: ageing, immigration, territories and social regulations.

Ageing is a pressing challenge for the EU, whose Member States' principal policy response is to extend working life by raising the retirement age. In recent years this has been accompanied by changes in pensions and the sale of financial products to improve retirement income. The Social Pillar recognises that everyone in old age has the right to resources that ensure living in dignity.

Looking at the Belgian example, he noted that the government was aiming for a retirement age of 67. The problem he says is that most workers are not able to continue to work beyond the age of 65 for health reasons. The answer to that is to improve the quality of life at work, to ensure better working conditions and a transition to retirement through a steady reduction in working time, as well as career planning.

"We must act in solidarity and not fragment the working world because workers must have the same rights wherever they come from."



On immigration, Rolin said "the crisis we face is not a European Migration crisis nor a refugee crisis. What we face is a dramatic crisis in our capacity to welcome these people". It is time to stop the extreme right from seizing the narrative, he urged. We already see appalling anti-migrant policies in Hungary, Austria and Italy. What the trade unions must do is challenge the lies about migration and illustrate what the figures mean in reality. We need smart policies on immigration.

Pulling both those themes together Rolin recognised that together they had implications for our territories. What we need is a human, global policy, and a smart development policy. Ageing and migration mean that we must change our urban planning to adapt to changing needs, using all the means available, including technology.

Lately, Rolin had been shocked by an increasing number of speeches in the European Parliament from the extreme right, whose policies claim to be aimed at defending ‘our’ poor workers from workers who were “not like us”. Social regulation is vital therefore. We must act in solidarity and not fragment the working world because workers must have the same rights wherever they come from. And we must guard against social dumping which is fragmenting not just workers but our entire society.

Rolin’s views were echoed in Panel 2, which discussed working conditions in an ageing society. It was pointed out that government plans to raise the retirement age were seldom accompanied by measures to take into account the effects of ageing. Job content may need to be changed, older workers required better training in new technologies. The panellists suggested more pressure should be put on governments to design an active ageing policy with worker participation.

“Ageing and migration mean that we must change our urban planning to adapt to changing needs, using all the means available, including technology.”

Meanwhile, in Panel 7 on job quality and innovation, **Chris Mathieu** of Lund University noted that the more innovative a country, the higher its employment levels and the greater the job quality, while other speakers outlined how innovation led to a virtuous circle of improvement.

EU initiatives to protect and integrate migrant workers



Zornitsa Roussinova

Zornitsa Roussinova, the Bulgarian Deputy Minister of Labour and Social Policy, looked back at the role of the Bulgarian presidency of the Council of the EU, notably in advancing issues related to workers’ rights and the social dimension of the EU. The future of work, she pointed out, had been a horizontal priority for the Presidency. The Presidency had successfully resolved the big debate on updating the Posted Workers Directive and she was looking forward to the final signing of the legislative act.

The Presidency had also continued to work on and support the proposed Work-Life Balance Directive that should help improve women’s access to the labour market and enable fathers to take a greater role in family care. Similarly, it had advanced work on the Transparent and Predictable Working Conditions Directive to ensure workers are well informed. Those are two legislative acts on which during the first half of 2018 the Council approved its position and it is ready to start the negotiations with the European Parliament.

An important outcome of the June Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council (EPSCO) meeting for the smooth and effective functioning of the internal market with regard to the mobility of European workers was the consensus reached among Member States over the coordination and modernisation of social security systems, providing for better protection and enhanced mobility.

Another important decision during the Bulgarian Presidency of the European Council was related to the investment in Early Childhood Development, with coordinated actions by all stakeholders. It emphasizes the need to have integrated early childhood development policies as a tool for reducing poverty and promoting social inclusion.

Migrants' rights were part of the overall discussions at the March EPSCO meeting which discussed apprenticeships, an issue of key importance for young people and migrants. The Council looked at the concrete measures the EU needs to take to help migrants including language training. At the same time, she recalled, migrants need to be helped to adapt to the European labour market, while in Europe we need to identify the skills that migrants have.

“Digital skills are essential to enter and thrive in the labour market and in everyday life, and if we do not address the issue people will be digitally marginalised, both on the labour market and in society.”

Turning to the broader issue of the future of work in Europe, Roussinova pointed out that overly complex legislation could make Europe less flexible in responding to challenges. Digitalisation was another challenge, especially as 8 million people in Europe have never used the internet. Digital skills are essential to enter and thrive in the labour market and in everyday life, and if we do not address the issue people will be digitally marginalised, both on the labour market and in society.

Finally, she noted that the debate on the next European budget had been opened under the Bulgarian Presidency, after the proposal was published by the European Commission. Under the new MFF (Multiannual Financial Framework), over 100 billion euros will be allocated to the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+) fund, which in turn will help support the roll out of the European Pillar of Social Rights.

Visual harvesting



Throughout the Conference three artists, **Axelle Vanquaille**, **Kristof Braekeleire** and **Martine Vanremoortele**, sat in on the discussions, rapidly illustrating all the key themes and ideas put forward in simple graphic images with key words on huge poster sized sheets. The great strength of the graphic displays was that dotted lines were traced through them, showing the connections between the ideas, perhaps better illustrating the links than the spoken word or the PowerPoint displays. As each sheet was completed it was added to triangular displays in the central coffee area, with the display building up and filling space as the Conference progressed.

The aim was to encapsulate the main ideas in real time in an 'easy-to-understand' format, show connections and stimulate discussion. That aim was clearly achieved with participants soon gathering around the images to talk about them and capture them on their smart phones. Many delegates felt this was a very positive and creative aspect of the Conference.

Some Conference delegates also learnt how to do it themselves in Panel 15 on 'using visuals to provide foresight and learn about change'. **Sara Seraville** of Visual Stories showed participants how to illustrate simple ideas in words and pictures and make the link, for example by drawing two different scenarios with a bridge between them to get from a bad situation to a better, new one.

Participants were then divided into groups, assigned a task, and given pen and paper to illustrate their task. One group looked at climate change and sustainability. They showed a dull grey world full of factories and smoke, and a bright green happy world on the other side, the path from one to the other being illustrated in thought bubbles with a character they called 'gigi' using the words 'circular economy', 'just transition', 'green jobs' and 'green skills'.

Another showed people travelling across the waves from a difficult situation to a new one that provided health, jobs, schools, housing and policies to support the solutions. Yet another showed people travelling on a rocket called AI to show the frightening speed of artificial intelligence, with the people seeking skills. All the final presentations showed that the panel participants had embraced the process of using illustration to share and explain ideas (and had found that it did not require any special drawing skills).



A NEW ECONOMIC approach

Shortcomings & fixes

inequality

instability

financial crises

chile, scandinavia, russia, netherlands, ... the US goes on...

the NEO-LIBERAL modern replacing the KEYNSIAN model of the regulated welfare state

old the MODEL had bad RECORDS



inflation

BUT WE GROW

ACTUALLY higher INSTABILITY & low GROWTH

the BIGGEST LIE since STALIN (1,3% only)



OPEN ECONOMIES don't see rise in INEQUALITY

CANADA, NETHERLANDS, SWITZERLAND

automation is not new

↳ 200 years !!

ROBOTS are ALL around 1,5 Million already ↳ mostly INDUSTRIAL

people are Scared

US is quite BEHIND vs. GERMANY or SCANDINAVIA



Kurt Vonnegut Jr.

DON'T BE Scared

SAME happened with WEAVING for instance

WE'RE NOT ELIMINATING JOBS, it's EVOLVING



VisualHarvesting.com

Kristof Braekeleire

Plenary D Climate change and the transition to a green economy: what does it mean for jobs

Europe working together on a sustainable policy



Florent Marcellesi and Montserrat Mir Roca

While many jobs are becoming obsolete as a result of policy responses to climate change, new ‘Green’ jobs are sprouting up to replace them. But will this happen fast enough to avoid an increase in unemployment? **Montserrat Mir Roca**, ETUC Confederal Secretary and chair of plenary D, began by outlining the issues at stake, before asking the speakers to discuss the relationship between digitalisation and climate change. How would they affect jobs, and what was the role of training?

Green MEP **Florent Marcellesi** responded with a call to arms: “We need ambition when it comes to setting up new jobs”. He added that the vision of the Green-EFA party revolved around changing society – including schools, transport, tourism and industry. But the measures taken so far, such as recycling, are not enough, as problems remain with the materials we use and with Europe’s greenhouse gas emissions. He called for the energy-intensive industries to change and told the Conference that the European Parliament was developing proposals on this.

The Greens have a sustainable vision and he explained that his group had voted against CETA (the EU’s Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement with Canada) as they believed in the Green’s alternative policy which involved Europe working together on a sustainable policy. Raw materials are part of the problem (such as coal and illegal wood) but what is required is a total rethink of our economic strategy. Sustainable development is a necessity. The Greens are also aiming for a European strategy on steel.

Post-industrial society still needs social protection

Marcellesi called for a post-industrial society with a different economic system which still ensured social protection. The public understood that there are ecological problems that required action. He called for a Europe-wide grassroots debate on these mega-trends, which he felt had so far only involved the elites. As a Green, he had happily talked with mining communities in France, for example.

“The public understands that there are ecological problems that require action.”

Ecological change and digital change should be combined, he argued. A car, for example, is a piece of technology, but owning a car should not be a priority. On energy, he said that the Commission has been late in producing its document on funding for the former coal regions, but we should be honest with the workers concerned and say that coal is finished. Workers should be involved in the energy transition, as it was their jobs that would be affected. “We need ambition when it comes to setting up new jobs”.

A post-industrial society would still have industry, such as in agriculture or in the food business. He ended by calling for a Europe-wide grass-roots debate on these mega-trends, which he felt had so far only involved the elites. This is not how democracy should function.

Higher Green targets



Laura Martin Murillo

Laura Martin Murillo, an adviser to the incoming Spanish government, outlined the approach of the new regime in her country. She pledged that the environmental targets of her government would be higher than those of the previous regime, even though there was much ground to catch up. It would try to meet EU targets in all sectors even though it is in a coalition with only two years to go before an election, so any long-term changes would need to be agreed with other parties. Funding will have to be found to pay for this pledge even though Spain continues to suffer from austerity.

Spain would now concentrate on Green policies in its two major sectors, agriculture and tourism, as well as the traditional industrial and construction sectors. A particular problem for Spanish workers in times of global warming is that in agriculture, for example, many people work outside. Studies would be done sector by sector to ascertain their needs.

Despite these challenges it was important to maintain social protection. Over the last seven years Spain had lost many jobs, but the Green energy transition had not been enough to compensate for this.

At this point Mir Roca, the chair, intervened to argue that investment was needed to cope with all the changes. She gave the example of a 55-year old miner who would not want to leave their home town, while others might be prepared to move where there are new jobs, she said. In terms of economies adapting to change, she pointed out how cities can ban cars and how this can help the environment in a relatively straightforward manner.

She felt that workers hit by austerity in the ‘PIIGS’ countries (Portugal, Ireland, Italy, Greece and Spain) needed social protection. In her view, change could not be stopped, one could only ‘buy time’ so that everyone could feel on board with social progress. She pointed out that where change was needed and agreed upon, companies can then deliver quickly.

“We cannot stop change, we can only buy time. The problem is that how we use that time.”

Identifying alternative jobs



Luc Triangle

Luc Triangle, General Secretary of IndustriAll Europe, declared that, as his members included industrial workers, both from energy producing sectors and energy intensive sectors, he took a different view. His organisation believes that we will need a strong industry in 2030 and also beyond, although it will be a Greener and more resource-efficient one. Industry is part of the solution when it comes to decarbonizing our economy. We need, for example, steel to build our windmills. We need the chemical industry to find solutions for the circular economy.

Industry will always be part of our economy and it has already been investing in new and greener production processes, as well as new products. However, our industries as well as the public sector must step up investments to keep Europe's role as a front-runner in high-quality industrial production that contributes to sustainable growth and quality employment in Europe.

At the same time, we will also have to explore solutions for CO₂ emissions that will continue to be made due to technological constraints while global consumption is growing. Solutions like Carbon Capture and Storage/ Use (CCS/CCU) have to be further developed. "One person's waste is another's raw material", he said, pointing out that the number of Green jobs had grown between 2006 and 2014. Yet we still have millions of jobs in energy intensive industries today.

Moreover, there is no advantage in losing jobs in the EU as a result of their carbon footprint, and then importing products from China which have the same carbon footprint or even higher as the jobs we have lost in the EU.

'Just transition' risks to remain a theoretical concept at the moment he said, for example, "I cannot go to coal miners in Bulgaria and simply offer them a 'concept.'" He added that the coal miners in Katowice are aware their jobs lead to CO₂ production, but they also need to know where there are alternative jobs in their region. Just transition means that no worker can be left behind, and that we have to create new jobs in the region where jobs will be lost. A smart and comprehensive industrial policy that targets specifically these regions will be key to keep the communities and regions whole.

He said the trade unions did not have to copy the policies either of business or the Greens. Trade Unions have to defend the jobs of their members, and if jobs get lost because of ecological transition, we must deliver a solution for these workers to ensure acceptance for the

"There is no advantage in losing jobs in the EU as a result of their carbon footprint, and then importing products from China which have the same carbon footprint as the jobs we have lost in the EU."



transition. One must understand that the workers in carbon-intensive regions didn't choose a job that was polluting, but it is a job that supports their families.

He felt as well that digitalisation would lead to shorter, more precarious contracts, and pointed out that, for example, Green electrical engines in cars have fewer parts than internal combustion engines and that this will hugely affect employment. This point was made again repeatedly in Panel 13 on the automobile industry later that day, where speakers expected this effect to be seen in car production in the next two years.

Social protection and new ways of working

The ten interactive panels that preceded and followed Plenary D covered issues from the Europeanisation of multinationals to whether working time reduction was a good strategy in the changing world of work. While discussing digitalisation and the changing economy, one works council representative said he felt that even trade unionists are using Deliveroo and Uber, and that the union movement needed modernising if it is to recruit, particularly in Eastern European countries. **Aline Hoffman**, from the ETUI, chairing panel 6 on worker's participation, pointed out that Health and Safety issues were a good entry point for trade union input on international standardisation.

In a discussion in Panel 8 on working time reduction, **Aidan Harper** from the UK-based New Economics Foundation, said it can bring benefits to the economy, gender equality, society generally, health and wellbeing, and the environment. Harper argued that there is no clear correlation between working longer hours and greater productivity

Discussing social protection in Panel 9, **Sophie Swanton**, from the Université de Lausanne, said the evidence suggested that people are prepared to transition but they need time and money. Farmers, for example, whose specific jobs were no longer viable, needed help setting up new rural projects.

Discussions continued on Friday of the conference, with panel 17 on China echoing Luc Triangle's point about Chinese investment. Unlike in the West where workers were simply laid off, panellists said Chinese capital was more long-term and that Chinese industry, directed by the Chinese state and from communist party cells within large companies, rather than by market forces, had invested further during the financial crisis, which made it much stronger after the financial crisis. **Max Zenglein**, from MERICS (the MERcator Institute for Chinese Studies in Berlin), said that Chinese investors focused on long-term market share rather than profit.

Plenary E Digitalisation and the new economy, disrupting production networks while tackling climate change?

Digitalisation as a key development tool



Thiébaut Weber

Thiébaut Weber, Confederal Secretary of the ETUC and the chair of Plenary E, said that digitalisation of the economy is expected to disrupt the production process and change employment and work conditions on an unprecedented scale. Introducing the keynote speaker, **Andrus Ansip**, Vice President of the EU Commission who is leading the Commission's Digital Single Market project team, Weber said he was keen for the session to explore the links between digitalisation and climate change, and the interaction of digitalisation with demographic developments.

Keynote speech: The European Commission's view of the future

Ansip began his keynote by providing an overview of the changes to the world of work that Europe is currently facing and highlighted some political implications, quoting one recent survey which found that 70% of Europeans fear a robot will take their job.

Artificial intelligence services, your documents in your personal i-cloud, online shopping, the mobile internet were now all in your pocket, he said. On the way to work, and as a way to get to work. Then, just as people get to grips with one new technology, another comes along, he said.

He pointed out that while some felt the advances in technology were exciting, others were frightened as it was out of control and that robots threatened human jobs. Some feared mass unemployment as a result.

We cannot and should not ignore these changes, and it is inevitable that some jobs will change, and that others may disappear. Moreover, it's sometimes easy to forget that by helping with repetitive, unpleasant or dangerous tasks at home and at work, robots improve daily life, he said.

However, it is a plus rather than a minus that, by helping with repetitive, unpleasant or dangerous tasks at home and at work, robots can allow workers to carry out better and more rewarding activities. EU policy-makers, he

"By helping with repetitive, unpleasant or dangerous tasks at home and at work, robots improve daily life."



Andrus Ansip

said, were doing their best to minimise any ‘digital divide’ based on skills differences. He reminded the conference that, as Europeans age, the workforce is shrinking.

He saw digital as an excellent way to help tackle youth unemployment, to provide sustainable quality jobs and create inclusive growth. He said the Commission has many initiatives which invest in local digital infrastructure, helps people develop the right skills, helps emerging tech start-ups to grow and scale up. It encourages cross-sector digital services like e-government, e-health and e-agriculture.

He added a warning: “Dragging one’s feet when it comes to technology advances can make eventual job losses worse.”

Do more robots mean fewer jobs for humans?

A high number of factory robots does not necessarily mean high unemployment, Ansip said. Germany, Sweden and Denmark were among the world’s top six countries for robot densities in manufacturing (according to the International Federation of Robotics), but all three had unemployment rates below the EU average.

Ansip hoped that digitalisation would lead to a better work-life balance and higher incomes. For example, Microsoft had introduced a new machine to help radiologists which, rather than replacing their skills, would complement them by helping them identify the boundaries of tumour cells and track their progress. This is a machine technology that amplifies and complements the skills of the human expert, so new technologies are making new forms of work possible.

“The Commission sees digital innovation and progress as a key tool to promote socio-economic advance in developing countries.”

Ansip emphasised that there is no single or simple solution. In terms of facilitating the digital transition, the key word was ‘skills’. The Commission’s proposal for the EU’s next budget included the Digital Europe Programme with a specific focus on developing advanced digital skills in areas like HPC (High Performance Computing), AI, cybersecurity and digital public services.



He added that digital is also a top priority in the EU’s development policy. The Commission sees digital innovation and progress as a key tool to promote socio-economic advance in developing countries, particularly in Africa.

Technological development will continue with or without us, he said, although people who risked losing their job because of digitalisation need and deserve our help.

He concluded by declaring that: “It is better to recognise how much our societies can gain from going digital. And Europe needs an adaptable workforce with appropriate digital

skills. That is why we should acknowledge the need to accompany this transformation, to do everything in our power to minimise any negative impacts.”

Organising the un-organised



Jamie Woodcock

“These companies sometimes fire people by text – ‘you have been deactivated’ appears on your phone.”

What was the reality of the digital and platform economies for workers? **Jamie Woodcock**, a researcher at the Oxford Internet Institute, described a project he had run. He had researched delivery drivers (working for Deliveroo) for many years. He quoted the case of one young Deliveroo driver who had recently graduated and who also works in a bookshop. He is often too tired and too busy to eat enough calories for all the cycling he has to do. He sometimes must skip breakfast if he has a client, and he works all evening. Nevertheless, he still found the time to be active in a trade union.

Woodcock listed three reasons for the rise of the work conditions he had studied:

1. A lack of regulation (as is frequently reported in the media, Uber has many employees who are not legally employees)
2. Changes in technology
3. Both workers and employers want greater flexibility.

He also outlined three areas where new forms of work are based on platforms. Some are location-based, such as Uber or Deliveroo. A second example would be the sort of ‘micro-work’ that is part of the way a company such as Amazon works. And, finally, there is online freelancing, such as in the case of a graphic designer.

While low or infrequent pay is obviously an issue, the lack of collective bargaining is another feature of the gig economy, as is lack of job security. These companies sometimes fire people by text, Woodcock said – ‘you have been deactivated’ simply appears on their phone.

He then asked a question: what standards would we like to see from these platforms? Customers, governments and workers could all regulate this. When we are discussing regulation, we should also think of the environment – Uber has a significant effect on this. Platforms are responsible for 2% of global emissions, the same as airlines. Uber workers themselves have little ‘agency’ to affect this, while at the same time Uber can claim to create minimal environmental damage as it owns no cars.

Woodcock proposed certification of platform companies as a solution. Certification does not always work well – however, he pointed to a Living Wage employer certification in operation in the UK which was popular with workers and may also have reputational benefits for platforms.

New forms of work are currently seen as peripheral and something only affecting young people. But they will become more mainstream, so trade unions should look harder at organizing there, he concluded.

Gabriele Zimmer MEP, Chair of GUE (the Confederal Group of the European United Left and the Nordic Green Left) in the European Parliament, began with a call for radical measures to curb the impact of digitalisation on the workplace. And, she argued, we should insist on binding measures from policymakers, agreed between social partners, not voluntary agreements.



Gabriele Zimmer

The main challenges facing societies, she said, are demographic change, migration, climate change and digitalisation. The climate change discussion can be focussed around economic growth, but the other issues should be looked at individually.

We should look at environmental growth and social growth in tandem, she argued, adding that we need sustainable growth. There was a warning for the EU, which needs to be ready for the next crisis, and should change direction to confront the looming challenges.

Zimmer was particularly critical of the EU's short-sighted approach to migrants. We are closing off the EU to the outside world with our hard border, so we are not using peoples' abilities from all over the world. "We are not being the Europe of human rights", she concluded.

Safeguarding and nurturing the digital workplace

Subsequent panels explored other aspects of the impact of digitalisation and the new economy. Panel 12 on digitalisation and working conditions investigated the issue of whether regulation on health and safety in the workplace had caught up with the extent of automation. Speakers stressed the responsibility of machine designers, as well as factory owners and managers, to ensure that new production processes didn't put workers in danger.

Panel 18 on digital skills noted that the transitions examined at the Conference are having a strong impact on future skills needs. Skills are only part of a broader puzzle, however. Besides skills development there must be investment in jobs and in territorial policies to ensure cohesion and availability of jobs. Mobility policies are also important and continued social protection is key.

Plenary F

Globalisation and Europeanisation:

European solutions for global problems?

European solutions for global problems

Introducing the theme of Plenary F, chair **Liina Carr**, Confederal Secretary at the ETUC, reminded panellists of some of the global problems in question. Migration and trade were two issues being debated at that day's European Council meeting. But how do the four fundamental freedoms of the EU relate at the global level? Is the freedom of movement of people and goods beneficial from a climate perspective? Does digitalisation bring us closer or divide us? Does digitalisation bring the promised benefits of modernising jobs and improving the workplace?

We need globalisation with European characteristics



Pascal Lamy

Pascal Lamy, former WTO head and EU Trade Commissioner, and now President emeritus of the Jacques Delors Institute, nailed his colours clearly to the mast: “Looking ahead we should keep trying to Europeanise globalisation. That is my fundamental stance.”

Our European social system, he believes, is part of the European brand. In Europe there is less tolerance of inequality, for example. Of course, we still have inequality, but it is less pronounced than elsewhere because we care about reducing it. Similarly, Europe pays more attention to human rights and workers' rights.

One of the biggest global challenges, though, is the Greening of the economy. The political reality is that in Europe we are ahead on environmental issues or we are seen to be: outside of Brussels the European flag is not seen as blue but green. We must keep our leadership role on environmental standards.

On digitalisation, by contrast, Europe lags behind. Globalisation will be digital, and Europe has its own take on this: here we value individuals and data, while the US and China have a different view. So, we must put our stamp on this. Europe is behind in terms of inventing the new products of the future, but we do apply specific European values.

Summing up, he said that Europeanising globalisation meant modernising, and it meant ensuring the process does not hit some more than others. That means we must ensure the social dimension and ensure we do not have a digital divide.

Europe needs to be stronger on global issues



Zoltán Pogátsa

Zoltán Pogátsa, Professor of economics at the University of Western Hungary, was somewhat less upbeat in terms of Europe's potential. Identifying the three big problems caused by globalisation – namely: environmental degradation; rising inequality; and less respect for human rights and democracy – he said Europe must answer these challenges. Its response should be: sustainability, social Europe and fighting for human rights and democracy.

he does not believe Europe is as strong on these issues as it claims. Europe does the most for sustainability, for example, but even Europe's economy is unsustainable. Europe has also traditionally been the most equal continent, but at the level of our countries, not as a Union.

The reason he felt more reticent about the Europeanisation of globalisation was that

In Pogátsa's view, the European social model has never really existed, except in individual states. Inequalities exist at member state level. Even Sweden – the continent's most egalitarian society – was seeing rising inequality.

Traditionally, Europe has been very strong on human rights and democracy – but some Member States do not live up to these ideals, Hungary being a case in point. In fact, there is no consensus on what constitutes human rights and democracy in the EU he believed, meaning it cannot really claim those rights as an 'acquis communautaire'.

Pogátsa's views provoked reactions from both his fellow plenary speakers and the floor. When asked to respond, Pascal Lamy said that most of the problems he identified as coming from globalisation were actually from market capitalism. The intensification of globalisation had increased inequality for some, but at least we have our social systems in Europe to provide a safety net. Nor is it correct to say there is no EU social model, because we have many measures, such as the Social Charter.

Lamy agreed that, on democracy Hungary and Poland were not moving in the right direction, but EU members are bound by democratic principles under EU rules. Furthermore, said a speaker from the floor, those principles are being applied, as we can see from the recent decision to trigger Article 7 proceedings against Poland.

Local solutions to global problems



Liina Carr and Gesine Schwan

Gesine Schwan, President of the Humboldt-Viadrina Governance Platform, took a slightly different tack, suggesting we should look to the local level, even the municipal level, to deal with the challenges of globalisation.

Picking up on Pogátsa's point, she said there were several reasons why Europe did not or could not live up to its own principles. On the social model for example, Europe is very diverse, making it hard to apply a single social

model. It would be even harder at the global level. It is also true that we have still inequality. Meanwhile Westphalian principles mean that national states can still veto collective political action. We do not have an international institution that has power over the national state.

The answer, Schwan believes, is to find different levels and actors. To overcome our global challenges, and come back to our European values, we have to strengthen action at the community and municipal level. Green Europe, the social model and the peace model, all are models that need to be applied at that very local level. We need multi-stakeholder participation to complement representative democracy, and that works better at the local level.

These arguments apply in particular to the migrant question which, Schwan believes, can only be resolved through solidarity. We should empower municipalities to take migrants, to choose them and to use them to help local development.

In the discussion that followed, Pascal Lamy agreed that European laws and standards should be implemented at every level, including municipalities. Social integration suffered from falling into the gap between economic integration and political non-integration, and that this too has to be tackled at EU, national and local level.

One size doesn't fit all

Earlier, in Panel 6 on the Europeanisation of multinationals, **Pascal Demat** from the SAP-SE European Works Council, had said his council was active in all European countries and was trying to tackle the changes to the world of work caused by globalisation. One challenge is that laws vary so much between Member States. An even bigger challenge for trade unions is that they no longer seem relevant to many workers in today's jobs. Another speaker in the same panel believed digitalisation was an opportunity for transnational trade union activity, but currently most resources are concentrated at a national level.

Keynote speech

Trade policy needs to be more value-based and inclusive



Cecilia Malmström

In her keynote, **Cecilia Malmström**, European Commissioner for Trade, welcomed the discussion by trade unions on the megatrends facing us now, recalling that labour and the trade unions played a key role in shaping the continent in the 20th century.

Globalisation is not a bad thing of itself, she said, but like everything else it presents opportunities and challenges. The important thing is to shape trade policy and promote EU values, which is what the European Commission is trying to do.

Trade policy must be inclusive, which is why the Commission published reports of all negotiations, making the process very transparent. Transparency was fundamental she believed because it raised the quality of discussion and feedback and created trust among citizens.

Trade policy must also include labour and environmental standards and should promote corporate responsibility. Recent examples of how social and environmental standards could be inserted into trade deals included the EU agreement concluded recently with Japan that covers 630 million people and one quarter of world GDP and contains references to the Paris Climate Agreement.

"The message the EU is sending to its partners is that it wants to work openly with them and shape globalisation with rule-based trade."

The trade deal with Canada was also very progressive, linking trade with sustainable development and including high standards on human and trade union rights and environmental protection. 165,000 jobs in the EU depend on exports to Canada, including 23,000 in Belgium. The new agreement with Mexico includes a special chapter on fighting corruption and the forthcoming deal with New Zealand also promised to be highly progressive.

The message the EU is sending to its partners is that it wants to work openly with them and shape globalisation with rule-based trade. Over 31 million jobs in the EU are dependent on exports and around the world many people have been taken out of poverty because of trade.

One challenge to be faced by Europeans was that, as the world changes, the western world is becoming less dominant. Over the next ten years 90% of global growth will be outside the EU. We must adapt and cooperate with other countries. We need to advocate for rules and social safety nets and pioneer values-based progress. Trade agreements are one way of doing that, for example

by trying to stop trade in products related to torture: last year, the EU created the Alliance for Torture-free Trade.

Trade needs rules

Rules have a wide impact, because the world is so inter-connected: a car bought in Belgium can be designed in Germany and built in the US. Trade deals can be bi-lateral as well as multilateral of course, but they must be anchored in a multi-lateral system. For that we have the WTO with its 164-member countries. It is not perfect, but its rules are good, and it has served us well, including the least developed countries.

There is still room for reform, however: we need more transparency and level playing fields. It won't be easy, as we must work with other countries, including the US. The decision by the US to impose tariffs on steel and aluminium is very disappointing, but the EU must respond in a proportionate and intelligent way.

“The message the EU is sending to its partners is that it wants to work openly with them and shape globalisation with rule-based trade.”

In conclusion, we must be ready for change and continue to reform the WTO to spread the benefits of globalisation, including through welfare and skills training, and we must adjust to the mega-trends. The EU and organised labour can be partners in this: trade unions are on the frontline of change and they should keep pushing for worker protection and high social standards.

Summing up at the end of the session, **Liina Carr**, Confederal Secretary at the ETUC, said we need to strengthen the mechanisms to ensure unions are listened to. She called for ILO labour standards to be included in all EU trade policies, and that union agreements in trade deals must be enforced. She added that unions agreed with the Canadians about enforcing the social chapters of the CETA deal.

Plenary G

A new economic approach:

what are the shortcomings of the

current economic model, and how

to fix them?

Mainstream economics isn't working: what can replace it?



Katja Lehto-Komulainen

With more and more economists arguing that the current economic model was failing to deliver stability and fairness, let alone prosperity, the purpose of Plenary G was to lay bare the shortcomings of the current economic model and provide a blueprint for a new approach.

Katja Lehto-Komulainen, ETUC Deputy General Secretary and the chair of the session, said the key question for any economic model is ensuring that it helps people. She then introduced the plenary keynote speaker, **Ha Joon Chang**, an economist at the University of Cambridge.

The need to tackle the short-term nature of the capitalist system



Ha Joon Chang

Chang launched straight into a defence of the Keynesian economic model. The argument of the political Right that the post-war Keynesian period of roughly 1945-1975 had been unsuccessful was the biggest lie since Stalin. For a start, there had been no banking crisis during that period. Since Keynesian economics has been supplanted by neo-liberal economists, however, countries have been plagued by greater instability and lower growth, including the severe global financial crisis of 2008-2010.

It is therefore wrong for neo-liberal economists to argue that globalisation means there is no choice. Canada, which has extremely open borders, has done very well without following neo-liberal economics. The Netherlands and Switzerland have also prospered without swallowing neo-liberal dogma, he said.

Chang was also critical of the way changes to economies are presented in different ways according to who is most affected by them. It was hypocritical that blue collar workers have traditionally been told to accept automation as robots took their jobs.

Yet, now that that automation is beginning to threaten white collar jobs, such as news reporting, medicine and the law, professionals are becoming concerned about their own children's welfare.

Automation is actually a long-drawn out process that has been underway for about two hundred years, he pointed out. A new departure however, was that previously most automation was concentrated in manufacturing but some of the newer robots are 'service robots', helping in the caring industry. Very few jobs can be completely mechanised, however, he said, pointing to one OECD study that said that less than 10% of jobs are under threat of immediate automation.

"The idea that the post-war Keynesian period of roughly 1945-1975 had been unsuccessful is the biggest lie since Stalin."

Technology does not necessarily lead to job losses. Chang says 98% of people weaving cloth in the nineteenth century lost their jobs, but as more cloth was woven and living standards improved *more* people worked in the sector in total. Technology and greater wealth meant that more people had access to more clothes, so the number of jobs grew. He referred to Karl Marx who said that after each strike of any importance, a new machine appears. Capitalists do not like employing workers, they prefer machines, he said.

Welfare systems help to determine political responses to automation. Chang pointed out that Scandinavian workers have a good welfare safety net and so they oppose automation less than US workers. In the US, by contrast, workers need a job to keep their medical insurance. Most US workers are not unionised, and even Obamacare does not last long.

A Universal Basic Income is a good start

Chang also discussed the nature of work itself, questioning the need for a 35 hour or a 40-hour week. Analysis shows there is a lot of unpaid work and this is particularly true of women. Instead, he argued, we should organise our society so that everyone can contribute to it, and then they get paid. In his view, working is crucial as the workplace is one of the most important structures in society, for our psychological self-worth. A Universal Basic Income getting a house and food for everyone may not be enough, but it is a start.

Concluding his keynote, he referred to the short-term nature of the current capitalist system. In the 1960s, share ownership was typically for five years, now the average period for share ownership is 6-7 months so companies like Samsung can also see the problems with this. The current system needs to be regulated, he said, otherwise further crises are inevitable.

Change the accounting system

Prof. Enrico Giovannini of Rome University, who has worked at the OECD as Chief Statistician, took up Chang's theme of the need to transform the system. The 2009 crisis was a 'classic' capitalist crisis, he said, but the events of 2012 made it an 'exceptional crisis', that required innovative policies. We need to rethink current EU policies, for example fully implementing its Social Pillar which is linked to some of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which the UN will be focusing on for the next 15 years.



Enrico Giovannini

“Workers are not considered part of the assets of a company, they are just a cost.”

He also pointed to the current accounting system which incentives companies to invest in machines rather than in training people. “Workers are not considered part of the assets of a company, they are just a cost. According to international accounting standard, as workers are not fully controlled by the company, they are not an asset”, he said. When he worked at the OECD he had suggested ways of changing these rules, also in national accounts.

In addition, the systems for evaluating national economic welfare are based on the wrong model, as social and human capital are not captured by it. There are already a lot of other indicators which are not used as journalists and some economists are lazy. Household disposable income is an important measure of prosperity but, unlike GDP, it is rarely quoted or incorporated into policy.

Challenging the current economic model



Ann Pettifor

“Unions made a mistake when they accepted the blame for pushing up inflation in the sixties. They were simply asking for money for more money for their members as prices went up.”

Ann Pettifor, Director of Policy Research in Macro Economics (PRIME), a network of economists concerned with Keynesian monetary theory and policies, continued Giovanni’s theme of the measurement of economic success since Keynes. The OECD had devised the idea of ‘growth’ in 1961, egged on by a Financial Times journalist, Samuel Brittan, she said. Keynes, however, had been interested in ‘levels of economic activity’, which did not necessarily imply growth per se.

The death knell of post-war Keynesian economics had been sounded when high rates of inflation emerged in the sixties. Trade unions were blamed for pushing inflationary wage rises. The unions made a mistake when they accepted they were the cause of inflation because it was not really their fault. They had

simply asked for more money for their members as prices went up, she argued.

Pettifor felt that there was a sense of complacency about economics and that socialists and trade unionists have a responsibility to challenge the current economic model. They also had a role in countering popular demand for ‘strong men’ like Orban, Putin and Trump. “We are facing a situation similar to the unfettered economic markets” of the 1930s. “The dominant economic model is a threat to us” she warned.

On the question of sustainability, she pointed to our smartphones as one example of the urgent need for change. They are made from approximately 62 minerals, ‘rare earths’, many extracted

from conflict states like the *Democratic Republic of the Congo*. “We have to use child labour and pay billions in the D. R. Congo. ...We do not have an infinite supply of these metals”, she said.

End the “religion” of competition



Philippe Lambert

Philippe Lambert MEP, co-Chair of the Greens/EFA group in the European Parliament, felt that with neo-liberalism we are dealing with a religion, and that the earlier speaker, EU Trade Commissioner Cecilia Malmström, is a ‘priest’ of that religion. Their belief is that humans should compete, and it is humans’ fault when it goes wrong, he said. He described the previous speakers, who were critical of this orthodoxy, as “music to my ears”.

Neo-liberalism was still influential, however. In the European Institutions, Emmanuel

Macron, the French President, is now seen as the new European hero, Lamberts said, as Macron has a philosophy of ‘winners and losers’, but this is all seen as justified as it is claimed that society overall will benefit.

Lambert rejected the ideology on which the current EU orthodoxy is based. He felt their default view is that humans should always compete, and it is therefore people’s own fault when it goes wrong – and he disagreed with this. Overlooking the situation in the EU as a whole, he was particularly depressed when mainstream politicians had given up the struggle against the forces that Anne Pettifor had referred to, pointing out that in Hungary the liberals had joined the authoritarians in government.

Ending on a slightly optimistic note, he said that capitalism itself may call a halt to this process as, ultimately companies need to sell things to consumers. Henry Ford had paid his workers to buy his cars, and companies like Apple need people to be customers, so robots would not be allowed to make people redundant.

Relinquishing control to make a profit



Thomas Coutrot

Earlier, in Panel 11, **Thomas Coutrot**, a Researcher with DARES in Frances (Direction de l’Animation de la Recherche, des Études et des Statistiques) had said that if managers gave more leeway to employees their companies could be more profitable. But one aspect of managerial behaviour seems to be that they see retaining control as more important than simply aiming for profit.

Young trade-unionists' discussion on managing transitions

Tackling the problems of the present with the policies of the past?



Jacki Davis

Debate in the special session for young trade unionists' focused on the nature of the challenges presented by the megatrends, and the necessary trade union response.

Jacki Davis, the Conference 'themeweaver' who chaired the session, began by listing the key questions she thought had arisen so far in the conference. She asked the panel if they would have highlighted the same issues, namely: 1) the need to identify the questions before we can answer, resisting using the past to address the future; 2) the need to address the

fundamental challenge of the fragmented workforce; 3) the importance of strong social dialogue and strong collective bargaining; 4) the need to identify and understand how these mega-trends work together and; 5) recognise that while upskilling and life-long learning is very important, we need complex and multi-faceted solutions.

The ensuing discussion centred around three broad themes.



Hugo Bahut

First, was trade union strategy in the face of change: Kicking off, **Hugo Bahut** from the Portuguese national trade union centre UGTP, argued that there was a mismatch between the problems we face and the tools available to tackle them. He noted that, while we continue to talk about the future, we have the problems of the present and the policies of the past. One of the best tools we have is social dialogue, but we need to do more work on that and work together as Europeans.

Responding to his point, **Viktória Nagy**, representing the Hungarian trade union SZEF and the ETUC Youth Committee, agreed on the need to work horizontally, through networks and alliances. Policies should follow a holistic approach, and the ETUC and ETUI have a big responsibility in this because it cannot be done at the national level. She also stressed the need to redefine the notion of worker and employer and recognise for example that the 'platforms' that have emerged in today's economy are, in fact, employers.

When asked what we can do to respond faster to the pace of change, Nagy's reply was that we need to understand what is happening. She was surprised at the optimistic approach of the OECD on the creation of new jobs, warning that while it was a good thing those jobs were in the new economies, we must anticipate that by regulating the new economies and ensuring sustainable, quality jobs.



Viktória Nagy and Graham Sansone

Bahut felt optimistic about the age range he had seen at the Conference, and noted that even the older people still had a youthful mentality. Sansone warned that it would still be challenging for trade unions to engage young people, who are bombarded by new media, by different messages. The trade unions needed to adapt to find new ways of attracting them. He felt that some trade union leaders showed scepticism towards youth.

Second, was the need to reach out to new members: Nagy pointed to studies showing that the reason people do not join unions is because they are not being asked to. It is time to be open to young people because trade unions can be too rigid, with heavy bureaucratic procedures that take months to react.

Sansone agreed on the need for a quicker response. This is the instant generation, used to getting things almost immediately – even employers if they are younger.

Unions should also look at collective agreements to show they can be effective. The same company often has a different collective agreement from country to country. It is time for the unions to clean up our own house. Bahut pointed out that IG Metall has managed to organise more young people in recent years by making a strategic choice to engage in active efforts to gain young members. Unions must also show a younger face to workers – at Automax, young workers were attracted to the union because of the presence there of credible young people.

Third was the European response: Nagy stressed the need for a Social Europe to create common ground, with national trade unions enforcing the policies set at the EU level. The problem is that with 28 Member States it takes a long time to reach consensus, but she warned we could see other countries leaving if we don't adapt. Bahut was optimistic about social Europe; however, there was a need to discuss this more and promote dialogue among the social partners. NGOs could also help by encouraging politicians to get on board.

Nagy also said that, rather than simply concentrating on recruiting in the major industries, her union had recruited successfully at young people's festivals and by giving potential young recruits a free gift (such as a cool pair of green sun-glasses), as a thank you for filling in a survey. Simply answering questions on the survey helped young people realise the value of unions, she said.

Finally, Davis asked the youth leaders to **identify the top priority for trade unions**, and for trade union leaders, from the discussions of the past three days.

"The most urgent thing for trade unions to do is build capacity to tackle the mega-trends and to recruit members, or they will lack legitimacy."

Sansone identified the need to tackle the lack of work-life balance. Although people had clearly defined working hours of between 35 to 40 hours a week, in reality they were expected to work far more and remain connected on their devices when they got home. France has introduced the right to disconnect and other countries could do the same. Trade unions must also work out how to be attract new members in the future world of work.

The most urgent thing for trade unions to do now according to Nagy is build capacity to tackle the mega-trends and to recruit members, or they will lack legitimacy. We need to be more flexible in our structures and be open to new forms of workers.

Wages and the work-life balance came at the top of Bahut's list. New collective agreements are driving wages down, with the result that young people are still living at their parents till they are 40. Unions must be attractive to new members, and finally we must make the Social Pillar work.

The search is on for new union members

Many of those views were earlier echoed in Panel 14 on youth and the future of work. It was suggested that trade unions should change how they approach new members, such as going to music festivals, and that schools should teach about the workplace, including trade unions.

Later discussions in Panel 19 on the future of work pointed to another challenge – the image of trade unions. Esther Lynch of the ETUC said when she googled 'trade unionist' the images that came up were very negative, meaning a negative bias against unions was already hard-wired into the system.

Plenary H Social dialogue: how can we create a common agenda for social Europe?

What is our contribution to social Europe?



Peter Scherrer

Introducing the final plenary, on prospects for social Europe, **Peter Scherrer**, ETUC Deputy General Secretary, said we need to ask ourselves what we as social partners can contribute to social Europe, bearing in mind the major themes that had been explored at the Conference.

Social dialogue is essential



Maxime Cerutti

“In Europe we enjoy better social well-being than the rest of the world, and good working conditions that are regularly monitored.”

Maxime Cerutti, Director of Business Europe, warned that this is a crucial moment for the future of social dialogue in Europe. Business and trade unions should work together on mobilising human potential.

In Europe we enjoy better social well-being than the rest of the world, and good working conditions that are regularly monitored. Europe’s well-developed industrial relations systems can be used as an asset in finding solutions to the problems we face.

While he welcomed the idea of a social dimension, when shaping our future agenda, he urged, we must always bear in mind what is good for growth. We must also ensure coordination, at the European, national, company and local level, because we have clear competences, and most decisions are made on the national level. The system will not be and should not be identical for every country, which is why social dialogue matters.

Some positive developments include the recent successful proposals for the next Multi-Annual Financial Framework

(MFF). More progress is needed, however, on the European Social Fund (ESF), which has not achieved all that it should have.

On what we can do as social partners to add to the social dimension, he believed investment was important, in childcare for example, to allow more women to work, and in skills, particularly digital skills to meet the new challenges of digitalisation. And again, he stressed, maintaining social dialogue was essential.

In response to a question from the floor about what employers can do to strengthen social Europe, Cerruti said they wanted to have their input and work in partnership with trade unions. A better bi-partite input was needed, beginning with dialogue at the national level, he concluded.

We need a social Europe



Penny Clarke

Does the social dimension come before, after or alongside the economic dimension, asked **Penny Clarke**, Deputy General Secretary and Head of EU Policy at the European Federation of Public Service Unions (EPSU).

Clarke began by saying that EPSU firmly believes in the need to put social Europe, including social dialogue, first. A common agenda already exists as we have, for example, the ILO Conventions and new EU Social Pillar, so the foundations are in place. The next stage is a robust discussion on better implementation.

Inequalities are growing within and between countries and that is why we cannot accept that the social dimension comes after the rest.

Our task now, believes Clarke, is to work together to reduce inequalities. One example would be to increase the availability of quality childcare, which must be made accessible and affordable.

“We know inequalities are growing within and between countries and that is why we cannot accept that the social dimension comes after the rest.”

The social partners need to be ambitious. The most effective results from the EU social dialogue are binding agreements. To convince our members of the social value of Europe, it must be seen to improve their lives. It has already delivered important results on parental leave, on part-time work and fixed-term contracts, showing that workers can shape the workplace in a broad sense.

To strengthen social dialogue more European social policy initiatives are needed, as well as a reduction – which the Commission can lead – in all the ad hoc groups that have grown up, weakening the social partners. She urged an end to unilateral approaches by business and to favouring social partnership.

The task for the trade unions now was also to strengthen our legitimacy, and that means building our organisations through recruitment.

In the discussion that followed, Clarke noted the comments regarding the role that Member States and social partners have to play, saying that European social dialogue could be seen as a form of ‘vertical subsidiarity’ in social policy, getting around the unhelpful notion of the European versus

the national level. We need to look at the national and European levels together to build social dialogue and the Social Pillar, and we can use other areas of policy to promote social dialogue.

Europe must pay more attention to ILO Conventions



Plamen Dimitrov

Picking up on Penny Clarke's comment about legitimacy, **Plamen Dimitrov**, President of the Confederation of Independent Trade Unions of Bulgaria (CITUB), agreed that representativeness is key for both unions and employers, especially the new forms of employers. He also agreed that the way to address this was through capacity building and organising.

Dimitrov therefore called for a greater focus on the ILO's core Conventions 87 and 98 on organising and collective bargaining in Europe, which were key to addressing the issue of social dialogue. We need social dialogue not only at the national but at the transnational level in today's world, and notably at the sectoral level. One of the best ways of addressing inequality would be at this sectoral and transnational level.

Another challenge is the unfair business model, which has to be addressed through global regulation. It is important to look at how different systems define the notion of a "worker" because we must include everyone, which also means the so-called self-employed in the gig economy, and domestic workers. Again, there are ILO instruments that address these.

These are challenges that must be taken up by the EU in its next semester. Collective bargaining coverage which will in turn lead to fairer wages should be part of the work on the Social Pillar, and wage conversion. The changes we face from digitalisation must also be addressed, including not only the process of work but also data privacy and cyber security for workers.

Change is both a challenge and an opportunity



Barbara Kauffman

The final speaker of the plenary was **Barbara Kauffman**, Director for Employment and Social Governance at the European Commission. She said we should see the major trends shaping the future of work as both a challenge and an opportunity. New technologies are an opportunity to provide greater flexibility, a term many in the world of work dislike, but something that can improve work-life balance, making it desirable. The challenges thrown up include the increase in atypical work, and the increase in inequality, particularly within countries, although wage convergence is improving in some countries.

Kauffman recalled some positive social developments, such as a reduction in the number of people living in social deprivation, although the EU Commission is still concerned about poverty and the lack of social progress.

For social Europe to work, we must address technological changes and keep Europe competitive. In line with Clarke's comments, she recognised that it was also important to ensure that the social front moves apace with the economic front and that we invest in people. Europe already has lots of legislation protecting social rights and now we have the Social Pillar.

At the June meeting of the Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council (EPSCO) agreement had been reached on work/life balance for parents and carers, on the coordination of social security systems and on transparent and predictable working conditions, as well as the revision of the Posted Workers Directive, including equal pay and access to social protection.

"For social Europe to work, we must address technological changes and keep Europe competitive."

Commenting on the call by previous speakers to make the European semester more social, Kauffman said that more than half of the new agenda was already on social issues. Now that the EU has set the framework, it was up to Member States to act, for example on child care, the integration of women into the labour market, early childhood etc. The social partners too have to play their role. Again, the EU has set out some ground rules, and there has been progress in the European semester on policy making. This year we have also had two country-specific recommendations to Hungary and Romania to improve social dialogue.

On collective bargaining Kauffman recognised that coverage has declined across the EU. It is time to meet the huge new challenge of covering those in new forms of work. Again the social partners have their role to play, in finding new ways to include platform workers and others in union representation.

In the discussion that followed, Clarke noted the comments regarding the role that Member States and social partners have to play, saying that it was an aim of social dialogue to create vertical subsidiarity. She added that there was a need for social dialogue to get around the unhelpful notion of the European versus the national level. We need to look at the national and European levels together to build social dialogue and the Social Pillar, and we can use other areas of policy to promote social dialogue.

From a national perspective Dimitrov pointed out the strong imbalances in Europe-wide bargaining that still needed to be addressed, saying that once something was decided in a multinational in Germany there could be no more bargaining in Bulgaria. The biggest problem he said was inequality, and we need effective collective bargaining to reduce inequality among working people. He called for a social imbalances report from the new EU semester so that we can see clearly what we need to do. Finally, he stressed again, we must of course put economic and social Europe hand in hand.

Representing the unrepresented

The impact of digitalisation had also been the focus of discussions in Panel 5 on digitalisation and job quality, where panellists had noted the lack of collective representation structures because platform workers are so dispersed and therefore difficult to organise. Platform work increases income insecurity and, because platform workers are mainly considered as self-employed, there is a lack of social protection.



Irene Mandl from Eurofound had called for a broader qualitative approach to platform work, including working conditions, employment conditions (who controls which tasks) and the industrial relations structure needed in this new employment relationship.

One future

Summing up, **Scherrer** said that social dialogue is a question of democracy, and that one of the major achievements of Europe is safeguarding democracy. As a trade union organisation, the ETUC is also working for democracy, especially “more democracy at work”, he said, drawing attention to the ETUC campaign of the same name.

Looking back at the whole Conference, he thanked the ETUI for their work in preparing it, and the speakers and participants for their contributions. The lesson he said is that we need to build the bridge between the four mega-trends and the different challenges facing us. The Conference had been a good start. We only have one future.

Executive summary

In her final themeweaving round-up journalist **Jacki Davis**, linked the different discussions and drew out the main conclusions at the end of each day.

Prepare for the future with joined up responses



Jacki Davis

First, she reminded the Conference of its starting point:

- In the opening session Guy Ryder (Director General of the ILO) said we are at a “moment of economic, social and political danger” and we risk “sleepwalking” back to the 1930s.
- ‘We have only one future’ so it does not make sense to try to analyse and deal with the four key mega-trends (globalism, technological change, demographic transition and climate change) in isolation from each other.
- We need to recognise this and develop joined up responses that take account of the connections between them. They impact on each other to shape the world of work that we want.

Everyone agrees we need a just transition. During the Conference, however, several speakers warned that while just transition was a nice concept, it would not necessarily happen in practice, she said.

In answer to the opening questions, she had identified five key messages that underpinned all the discussions:

1. Trade unions need firstly to imagine the ‘new worlds of work’ and they should then consider what this really means before seeking to develop solutions. In her opening talk, the Greek Minister, Effie Achtsioglou, had talked about the need to reassert old rights, but also create new ones that adapt to new world of work. Current workers’ rights do not protect the new kinds of worker. We need to redefine what is a ‘worker’ and what is a ‘company’ in this era of mobile firms and platform working. The boundaries are increasingly blurred. We need to develop new models to deliver sustainable, quality jobs. As Sharron Burrow said, it is not the technology per se that is the problem, but rather the business models of some of those exploiting the new technology. This means not just reacting to but anticipating change. Debates such as this event are important for identifying emerging trends and assessing their significance. This Conference has been as much about *identifying what the key questions that we need to address are* as identifying the solutions here and now.
2. Trade unions need to address the fundamental challenge posed by an increasingly fragmented and diverse workforce, which is making them increasingly vulnerable in all sorts of ways. Workers are more in need of protection and of someone to stand up for them than ever. At the same time, it harder for unions to reach out to people and therefore to represent them.
3. Strong social dialogue and strong collective bargaining are important in addressing new challenges and ensuring just transitions. This was stressed repeatedly in plenaries and in

many panels. Social dialogue itself was also impacted by changes in the world of work and it may have to change too. Trade union efforts to improve social dialogue face an uphill struggle. Trade unions need to do more at the European level in a Europeanised and globalised world. Many speakers warned that negotiations at the national level are not enough – they felt that transnational negotiations were needed, though others questioned how realistic this was in practice.

4. Identifying and understanding interconnections between all the mega-trends is crucial. “We will not succeed if we work in silos” was a point frequently made in the sessions on all the different mega-trends. Delegates felt that governance issues, social and industrial policies, labour market and family policies should all be discussed together. We need to involve everyone in developing solutions. Developments in one area impact and interact with others. If we fail to acknowledge this, it will not be possible to develop joined up solutions. We need to deliver generally effective responses to the many interrelated challenges facing us in the new world of work, and then shape that world in the way we want to.
5. We need to expose the myth that a policy of simply upskilling workers and giving them new digital or Green jobs will solve everything, and that innovation benefits everyone:
 - Upskilling is only part of the answer. “Not all digital jobs and Green jobs are decent ones”. Education and training are key, but they are not enough. Digitalisation does bring new opportunities but not for everyone. The problems facing workers in the emerging new worlds of work are too complex and multifaceted for simple solutions.
 - Luca Visentini rightly said at the opening, we need to avoid simplistic solutions that do not take account of the real risks and challenges facing workers today.

And finally, let us not forget, we must expect the unexpected.

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