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Building the future of work together

No future of work without Social Innovation

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Labour markets have undergone significant change over the past decade and all indications are that this will accelerate in the years ahead. Responding to these changes, the World Employment Confederation has launched a Manifesto calling for open, enabling, inclusive and sustainable labour markets, fit for the realities of life and work in the 21st century.

“No future of work without Social Innovation” explores the challenges and opportunities presented by today’s volatile labour markets. It provides policymakers, business and other stakeholders with a series of key recommendations in navigating the road ahead in order to deliver the efficient and resilient labour markets needed to drive growth and competitiveness.

Social innovation lies at the very heart of the policy recommendations. They propose a complete overhaul of the social structure that underpins the way that we organise, classify, support and regulate work. Work today is increasingly diverse and must embrace and nurture diverse forms of decent work if our economies are to flourish.

The recommendations recognise that well-functioning labour markets need labour policies that meet the needs of business and industry while also upholding worker’s rights and protections. For companies, social innovation is essential. It allows them to remain agile and prosper, confident in the knowledge that they can attract and retain a workforce with the relevant skills sets. For workers it means portable rights, new types of collective representation, access to housing and credit as well as pensions and sick pay throughout their lives.

The Manifesto highlights some key structural shifts driving labour market change. They include: the new economic environment and on-demand economy that is challenging traditional business models and blurring the lines between services and industry; the way work is now organised based on global supply change management resulting in more outsourcing, project-based and online work ; changing attitudes to work with rising individualisation and a need for fulfilment; the new approach to skills and competences and lifelong learning; and the onward march of digitalisation that enables people to work from literally anywhere, eroding the former 9-5 command and control office culture.

In this new world of work we need to revisit some of the core premises on which our social protection system was founded. The newly emerging forms of work need to be classified – are workers employees or self-employed? Either way these dispersed and online workers must be organised and represented and assured of decent and safe working conditions. At the same time we must support workers in managing risks such as periods of inactivity, sickness and pensions while also protecting the most vulnerable workers in our society including young people, older workers and ethnic minorities, and avoiding unfair competition and social dumping.

Alongside these challenges we must also address broader concerns such as preserving data privacy and providing life-long learning and career support to people as they lead more fluid working lives, with periods of employment, of self-employment of multiple employment and inevitably, periods of inactivity.

The Manifesto makes five policy recommendations, calling on governments and administrations to create a policy environment that acknowledges and embraces emerging trends.

Firstly, it calls for secure and **equal access to the labour market** through diverse forms of work. This includes flexible contractual arrangements that avoid unfair competition, support all workers equally and stimulate job creation. Next, it calls for **a fair job for all** with a guarantee of meaningful and decent working conditions regardless of the type of employment contract, with worker's rights respected and upheld along with their entitlements including pay and health and safety conditions.

The policy recommendations call for **a new social deal** with the modernisation of social protection schemes to reflect new work models. Social benefits including health, pension, sick leave and paid holidays should be transferrable and linked to individuals, not their work. Labour market security needs to be favoured over job security with labour costs and collective contributions between different forms of work on an equal footing in order to reconcile flexibility and security in the labour market. In particular we must rethink how we fund social protection in the future in order to provide these securities.

Skills and taking a strategic approach to training people with the skills to succeed in the labour market, is a core ask. Teaching both hard and soft skills as well as implementing lifelong learning and upskilling/reskilling will form an essential part of the new policy approach if nations are to take advantage of the opportunities for economic growth.

Finally the World Employment Confederation Manifesto calls upon policymakers to set in place responsible **labour market intermediation**. We need organisations to guide and support workers through more flexible careers and work closely with companies in matching supply with demand in the more diverse labour market. Fostering close cooperation between public and private employment services is essential as is ensuring that quality standards and regulations are enforced in all markets including cross border.

If we take action now we can build a futureproof labour market that celebrates its biodiversity and safeguards a work environment that is open, enabling, inclusive and sustainable.

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