

ETUI-ETUC Conference, 27-29 June 2016, Brussels

Shaping the new world of work – The impacts of digitalisation and robotisation

Panel 17: Working conditions in the sharing economy – crowdwork

Participants:

- Michael Silberman, IG Metall
- Joachim Schuster, S&D Group
- Ilaria Maselli, The Conference Board

Discussant: Kurt Vandaele, ETUI**Moderators:** Sylvia Kuba and Fridolin Herkommer, AK**Reporter:** Laurent Vogel, ETUI

The goal of this panel is to better understand the phenomenon of crowdworking by gaining an improved sense of crowdworkers' needs, backgrounds and approximate numbers. Our general aim is to discuss online platforms and their effect on the competition landscape and as well as on working conditions.

Michael Silberman (IG Metall) presents a research on the Codes of conduct of some companies and the expectations of crowdworkers. The wording of the Codes of conduct is often vague. For instance, they refer to independent contractors without defining what an independent worker is really. They mention a fair payment without setting a clear system of tarification. For the workers, the most important principals are: fair payment (in some cases, there is no payment at all or real difficulties to get effectively paid); the respect that the platforms should carry on serious or respectable tasks and the guarantee that they won't be punished if they refuse some activities. It appears also that health insurance and pension are serious issues (covering only 1/3 of the workers). Less than 10% of crowdworkers are union members (often because they have another job). Only 5% of them work more than 20 hours per week.

Sylvia Kuba (AK Wien) indicates the need to clarify legal issues. Many platforms present themselves as an initiative of young dynamic persons but, in some cases, the real owner are important capitalist firms (for instance, the Niki Lauda Airline has invested in a platform for the transportation of packages, another platform for cleaning staff has been created by a major investor Rocket-Internet with a portfolio of more than 3 billion €).

Illaria Maselli presented the results of a research on the GIG-economy. She considers that companies can be divided in two major groups: some are providing virtual and global services (for instance, architects, web designers, etc...), other ones are providing physical and local services (for

instance, cleaners, baby and dog-sitters, repair, plumbers, etc...). In the first group, due to the globalization, high skilled workers are not paid better than low skill workers. She gave the example of a platform for designers Co-contest. She compared the earnings of Italian and Serbian workers: average earning per contest is 36€ in Italy and 69€ in Serbia. In her data about Belgium, for local services, only baby sitters are paid under the level of minimal wage.

The discussion was mainly about the tasks of social sciences research. It is important to focus on existing on grass root level initiatives in order to understand the dynamics of social mobilization among crowdworkers (example, Uber drivers' strike in New York).