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

Panel 18: New forms of work and labour market policies

Participants:

- Maarten Keune, UvA-AIAS
- Fritz von Nordheim, European Commission, GD EMPL

Discussant: Ben Egan, ETUC

Moderator: Sotiria Theodoropoulou, ETUI

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Platforms – characteristics and challenges:

- Extreme individualisation of the worker – they don't know who they work for, who with, how much profit is made. Workers are treated increasingly like commodities
- Lack of transparency, which makes workers weak and societies weak.
- Platforms are unilateral – they determine access to employment, decide tasks and pay, monitor and evaluate performance.
- Blurring the boundaries between identity of the platform; it is a very abstract identity that is difficult to pin-point and to deal with.

Actions required:

- We have to regulate platforms. Social and human dimension of work should be at the centre. If platforms fail to create decent jobs they fail the **social test** and are not a viable solution.
- EU should work on the social dimension of platform economy
- We need stable positions for workers within platforms; we should promote internal flexibility, not external flexibility.
- Policies should support serial employment, not just steady jobs. Emphasis on development of transferable skills. Ensure enhances 'adaptability' of individuals. We need right for up-skilling, also for self-employed. Labour market policies should be extended also to self-employed. – according to Fritz von Nordheim, DG EMPL.
- We need further regulatory focus on new forms of work. But here the opinions of speakers differed. Fritz von Nordheim argued for "less legislation and more guidance".
- Ensure we have collective bargaining, social dialogue in place.

Challenges:

- Ideas for Social Pillar consultations to respond to new forms of work.
- Need to overcome distinction between standard and nonstandard contracts and typical and atypical work
- Changes unfold quickly, so trade unions have to be more flexible in how they react and respond; but these new challenges do not essentially require new tools, as many issues are similar to what has been so far.

- Where do we see employers and their organisations in all this?

Robots take over our work – is it going to be a good or a bad thing -> “depends on who owns the robots” (M. Keune).

Collective actors are shaping the outcomes, play an important role in the process. They should step up their game.

Institutions and rules matter in how much casualization we will see.