Foreword

The ILO marked its one-hundredth birthday in 2019 by adopting the Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work at the International Labour Conference. One of the major priorities identified in the Declaration was investment in the institutions of work, including in well-functioning and revitalized social dialogue. The ILO had the great privilege to host a round table in March 2020 aimed at identifying innovative ways to boost the roles of the social partners and social dialogue in the new world of work. Speakers included the EC Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs, Skills and Labour Mobility along with illustrious ministers and state secretaries. As a foreword to this volume, we thought it appropriate to reproduce some salient excerpts (edited) of the policy statements made during this round table.

Following the opening reflections by European Commissioner Schmit, remarks by subsequent distinguished speakers addressed the following questions:

- How can we strengthen the role of social dialogue institutions?
- How can we strike a balance between government intervention through regulation and policymaking and leaving the necessary space for the social partners to play a role in shaping the labour market?
- What can governments do to strengthen social partners' trust and to promote their full involvement in the consultative and policy-making process?
- What are the issues and transformational trends for which social dialogue could play a determinant role in the future?

Nicolas Schmit, Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs, Skills and Labour Mobility, European Commission

The ILO and the European Union share the same values. We share a social model that strongly integrates social dialogue, which promotes decent work and defends social justice. As the Commissioner in charge of employment and social rights, I am happy to announce the publication in January 2020 of a Communication laying out the Commission's priorities for the coming years in the social arena. It is the point of departure for a wide consultation process to prepare an action plan to implement this.

We are experiencing a time of great change. Not just because of the coronavirus, but also because of major changes in our economic systems as a result of climate change and high-speed technological transformation. We are continually asking ourselves what the impact of this technological change will be on the future of work.

The work carried out by the ILO in this regard is inspirational. The report prepared by the Global Commission on the Future of Work is rich in information, shedding light on this very complex situation. The report states: 'New forces are transforming the world of work. The transitions involved call for decisive action.' This is precisely what the

European Commission has decided to do, and is in fact our number one project. We want to organize the ecological transition in order to address climate change, and also to shape the digital transition towards greater justice and economic benefit. If we fail to do so, Europe will be left by the wayside and lose its position in the global economy.

We will succeed in this transition if our decisions are just, and do not lead to entire segments of the population feeling that they are being left out. We have this responsibility towards our planet, and a social responsibility to citizens, employees and entrepreneurs, not to mention future generations.

Every change represents enormous opportunities as well as risks. These changes must not be imposed on us, but must be negotiated, planned, organized over time and socially and economically sustainable.

Our obligation is to come together through social dialogue to try to understand the issues at hand and come up with a path forward. Europe must work together with member states, the regions and the social partners so that these transformations may generate a net gain for everyone.

One fundamental aspect of the transformation of the world of work is skills. The most profitable investment is in people, in human capital. We are launching a new skills agenda, because we believe that the future of Europe lies in the development of skills. Such investment is part of the European social model. In the next five to ten years we will have to reskill about half of the entire European workforce, more than 100 million people, in the absence of which inequalities, exclusion and injustice will increase.

This cannot be imposed top down. It is, first and foremost, in businesses, industries and at the level of the social partners that this will take shape, through more social dialogue, more collective bargaining and more social consultation.

There are of course grey areas where the employment status of workers is often unclear, in particular in the new digital and platform economy. We need a level playing field with rules, including social rules, aimed not to limit such platforms but to develop them. We need to reorganize our social protection systems in order to take full account of the evolution of this new economy. Workers must also have the right of association, including trade union representation. In the European context, coordinated rules to govern this digital economy are required.

In conclusion, we must constantly reinvent social dialogue. I have personally been inspired by Jacques Delors in the Commission, to whom we owe so much when it comes to social dialogue within European governance. Contrary to what many think today, Delors believed that the Commission should not do everything itself but leave much of the responsibility to the social partners, social dialogue and collective bargaining. I also believe wholeheartedly in collective bargaining and dialogue, which we now need more than ever. Respect for collective bargaining is an essential component of our European democratic models. To fail to reinforce this negotiating dynamic is to risk the future of our democracies.

If we can succeed in giving new impetus to social dialogue and restoring the value of compromise and the idea of a social contract, I believe we can once again be optimistic about the future of Europe.

Contributions Provided by Government Representatives

Croatia – Mr Aladrovic, Minister of Labour and Pensions

The shift away from traditional concepts of work is reflected not only in new forms of work but also in the need to redefine and adjust social security systems to these new trends. As regulators, we need to address these challenges with adequate policy measures that work for both the economy and our citizens. The task of the government is to create an enabling environment for business and development, good living and working standards, a quality social security framework, and so on.

Skills are the basis for competitiveness and employability, and are the joint responsibility of all stakeholders. We will therefore include social partners at both the national and EU levels in our discussions on skills and related issues.

Effective social dialogue requires social partners with the relevant capacities and organizational density. We must make an effort and provide mechanisms to build their capacity in this respect. New technologies, processes, forms of employment and an overall new world of work present challenges to the traditional model of collective bargaining and social dialogue.

The most important national-level institution for social dialogue in Croatia is the Economic and Social Council. I strongly believe that we will have to enlarge it in order to address future of work challenges. We should as well strengthen and institutionalize sectoral social dialogue, based on the best EU practices, which could also have a positive impact on problem-solving at the national level.

It is important also to enable the capacity-building of the social partners through the ESF Plus. The engagement of social partners at the EU and national level is vital for a successful design and implementation of economic and social policies, including those foreseen by the European Pillar of Social Rights.

Austria – Mrs Aschbacher, Minister of Labour, Family and Young People

In Austria, we have a long tradition of social partnership and social dialogue going back more than 70 years. It has been a central contributor to Austria's prosperity today and is the Austrian way for the future. In this spirit, the government programme for 2020–2024 foresees the active involvement of the social partners in full respect of their autonomy.

In order to modernize labour legislation, the Austrian government will initiate broad social dialogue on the future of work. The main aspects will be digitalization and the reconciliation of family and work, subjects of particular importance to me as the new Minister for Labour, Family and Young People.

Negotiations by sector allow a flexible reaction to economic and social conditions, such as productivity growth or rising living costs. The Collective Labour Relations Act provides for collective bargaining at enterprise level.

Collective bargaining on wages is the most important task of the social partners. It lies within the autonomous competences of employers' and workers' organizations. All employees of an employer governed by a collective agreement are covered by it, even if they are not union members. Thanks to this well-functioning system, Austria had collective bargaining coverage of 98 per cent as of 2017 (OECD). Austria opposes any initiatives, whether at European or international level, that might interfere with the autonomy of its social partners.

An effective labour market policy requires a joint approach between workers, employers and government representatives, as well as adequate consideration of regional disparities and characteristics. Accordingly, the social partners' involvement in labour market policy design in Austria is sustainable and extends across all three levels – federal, provincial and regional – of the public employment service.

Albania – Mrs Sorensen, Deputy Minister of Finance and the Economy

Albania shares some of the global challenges but we are struggling as well with the fundamentals of labour market institutions and economic reform at national level.

The Labour Code sets out the institutional and legal framework in Albania for tripartite social dialogue, collective bargaining and amicable resolution of collective disputes. The National Labour Council in Albania is a platform for mutual sharing of information and consultation and aims to foster dialogue to achieve lasting consensus on issues of labour market policy and legislation. We are currently expanding tripartite dialogue at the national and regional levels, including by establishing regional tripartite councils.

We are also enhancing technical discussions, as well as increasing the capacities of our social partners. The first major challenge in the Albanian labour market is to create more jobs; the second is to create *better* jobs, which is the reason why most people are leaving Albania. The third challenge concerns the impact of labour market legislation in migrant workers' destination countries on our own economies, a problem and a responsibility shared by us all. It is important that social partners are included in discussions, especially concerning the anticipation of skills needs and the orientation of future vocational education and training.

In Albania, we focus a lot on declining industries and on older workers that need to remain relevant in the labour market, and less on the future and our young people. Social dialogue has to be agile in a polarized labour market, and be able to respond to the needs of both high-skilled and low-skilled workers.

Bosnia and Herzegovina – Mrs Gudeljevic, Minister of Civil Affairs

Trade unions and employers' associations do not participate in social dialogue at the state level in an organized manner. Their expectations are addressed almost exclusively by sub-state government institutions.

Representatives of workers and employers do not show enough interest in establishing a common forum for social dialogue, and trade unions and employers' associations are fragmented and insufficiently organized.

The economic and social councils are currently functioning only at the level of the two entities, namely, the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Republika Srpska, and Brcko District. The Ministry of Civil Affairs recently launched an initiative to establish the Economic and Social Council of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Although the state should leave the necessary space for social partners to play their role in shaping the labour market and working conditions through social dialogue, including collective bargaining, its own role is far from minor. The state is responsible for citizens' well-being and thus for the establishment and maintenance of social peace and economic prosperity.

Our general policy in this domain is oriented by the awareness that collective agreements bring greater stability to the labour market and directly affect social security, thus substituting to some extent for government intervention in the labour sphere.

Cyprus – Mr Malikkides, Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance

Industrial relations systems in Europe are stronger where social dialogue and tripartite cooperation are prioritized. This was very evident in Cyprus in our response to the economic crisis of 2013, for example, which required bringing together the social partners in an effort to cope with a systemic threat and achieve common goals, building and regenerating lost trust.

We need to examine the internal factors influencing social partners' capacity to participate in social dialogue, such as insufficient financial resources, technical capacity, organizational and negotiation skills. These challenges will require social partner organizations, as well as public authorities, to move out of their comfort zone of established practices.

New channels of communication and formalizing new social dialogue structures and procedures can reverse stagnating and declining membership. New emerging players also need to be involved, such as workers engaged in new forms of work, as well as new employers.

Cyprus considers its voluntary system of industrial relations to serve this purpose well, based as it is on a collaborative social dialogue exercise.

In Cyprus, the system has never been based on regulatory or legal tools; rather, a tripartite 'gentlemen's agreement' from 1977 is still in force. The social partners have consistently shown a high level of respect. Tripartism remains the key method to achieve consensus between the social partners and government.

France – Ms Karvar, Delegate to the ILO Governing Body

In France, we have a system that, on one hand, is marked by a low level of union membership, but which confers substantial responsibility for the management of entitlements (social entitlements and social protection) on the social partners – trade union organizations and employers' associations – with a high level of coverage of collective agreements (although very low among SMEs).

However, the present system is undergoing major changes. In particular, based on discussions with employers' organizations and trade unions, there is a clear need to provide entitlements linked to individuals, regardless of their employment status. We are also discussing a possible decentralization of collective bargaining to bring it closer to employees, and the individualization of requests from workers and the diversification of the working world.

This decentralization of collective bargaining goes hand in hand with the legitimization of union organizations in private sector enterprises, which should be elected by the employees in order to ensure representativeness. A last and very important point is the promotion of enterprise-level agreements, to internalize flexibility by recognizing productivity, working hours and working conditions as subjects for collective bargaining.

We should address these questions globally, among the G7 labour ministers as well as international organizations of employers and workers, to reach agreement on an integrated approach to the transformation of work.

Lithuania – Ms Radisauskiene, Deputy Minister of Social Security and Labour

As young countries, the Baltic states should first of all focus on strengthening our social dialogue institutions.

In Lithuania we have a tripartite council. We are trying to introduce a new culture and new traditions to consult and involve social partners in policy-making, for example, regarding labour law and minimum wage setting, social insurance law and employment law. We should not change anything agreed in the tripartite council; the parliament has approved practically all amendments proposed by the council.

We need to strengthen the capacities of the Lithuanian social partners. Although we have quite a low trade union participation, we are trying to cover more and more of the population by collective agreements.

We regard the modern and digitalized world as a new opportunity. We have, though, to deal with the problem of platform workers, whose number is increasing. While it is hard to identify the employer of these persons, as the government, we are responsible for including them in our social insurance system.

The social partners, especially the trade unions, could also help us to reach people working as platform workers, and employers should be more transparent about who works for them. Adequate working conditions and social guarantees should be safeguarded.

Malta – Dr Falzon LLD, Minister of the Family, Children's Rights and Social Solidarity

The only thing that remains constant is change, and that maxim should even apply to our social dialogue systems.

There is an intimate correlation between our countries' economic situations and social dialogue. When we are doing well economically, the tendency is for dialogue with social partners to be good too. But when the economic environment gets tough, so does dialogue and communication.

A basic change which has greatly affected social dialogue and the social partners has been the shift towards more individualized work contracts. This brings us to other important issues, such as globalization, Bitcoin and artificial intelligence, which will also impact on social dialogue.

We need to talk about migration as well. We depend on foreign workers every year, without them we cannot sustain our economic growth, and that again affects dialogue. If we really want to be successful, we need to anticipate change.

Portugal – Mr Miguel Cabrita, State Secretary of the Ministry for Labour, Solidarity and Social Security

Social dialogue is key to national labour relations, is one of the preconditions for the European social model, and in fact also for the decent work agenda – for decent work and rights, good governance, social industrial change, economic growth and digital transformation. Governments must encourage social dialogue to tackle these strategic issues.

When you agree on certain principles and a diagnosis of the situation, you are better able to make dialogue productive. Governments should make available quality information for everyone. This helped to steer Portugal out of the 2008 crisis, through social dialogue based on shared knowledge.

Not only trade union density is important, but also their capacity to represent and be a voice for new groups of workers, young people, precarious workers, platform workers,

independent workers and migrants – groups that have not traditionally been insiders in society and the labour market. This is a challenge for the Portuguese trade union movement.

Governments should ensure that social dialogue has a high profile in the public sphere. Social dialogue must be open and flexible. It should not be a formal, rigid process but have the capacity to focus on the key issues at different levels. They include more traditional ones, such as labour laws, job creation, decent jobs, social security and social protection for different types of workers, but also new trends and new forms of work skills and vocational training, demographic change, reconciling family and work life, and of course climate change.

Governments should make careful use of extension mechanisms. While these can be useful especially when union density is low, when collective bargaining and social dialogue are strong enough it is always preferable not to use them, because they do not necessarily improve the health of social dialogue in the long run. Mechanisms to foster membership and density are crucial, for which governments should create incentives and improve information about the advantages, rules and mechanisms, including on how to become members. Concerning new enterprises, the question is how to associate them with employers' associations. Around 1.8 million people were covered by new collective bargaining in 2008, right before the crisis. From this historical peak, it declined to only 250 000 people in 2013. We have steadily been recovering since, and coverage is now between 900 000 and 1 million.

Sweden – Ms Grape, State Secretary of the Ministry of Employment

Regarding what governments can do in order to strengthen the social partners' trust in social dialogue institutions and to promote their full involvement, it is about ensuring three things: a balance of power, trust and space. First, a relative balance of power is a definite key to social dialogue that yields results in terms of job quality, fair working conditions, and adaptability to structural change in the economy and labour market. It is also about the government providing a somewhat level playing field for the partners.

Second, trust between the social partners, and also between the partners and the government, is fundamental, but it is hard to maintain even given goodwill on the part of the government. Every government has to take into account the interests of the electorate who brought it to power.

Thirdly, allowing significant space for the social partners has, in the case of Sweden, led to the development of strong bipartite social dialogue and collective agreements. The social partners are able to regulate the labour market to a considerable extent in Sweden. The partners thus have great influence, but also carry great responsibility. The Swedish bargaining system also leaves significant space for local agreements. In the wake of the financial crisis in 2009, this space was used actively to find solutions to manage a sharp downturn in the economy and avoid redundancies. With the spread of the coronavirus, the social partners at the local level will, I feel sure, use this space well, in the event of an economic downturn.

A new type of economy does not mean that old tools are outdated. The very flexible labour law in Sweden leaves a lot of room for the social partners to deviate from the law. This has proved very beneficial in terms of existing labour market governance, and in integrating new forms of work – such as platform work – into the collective bargaining

model. The trade unions in Sweden are now starting to sign agreements with companies in the platform economy, a phenomenon also observed in Denmark.

Contributions Provided by Social Partner Representatives at the National, European and International Levels

Slawomir Adamczyk, Independent and self-governing trade union 'Solidarność'

In order to be representative as trade unions, we need a large membership and the ability to conduct collective bargaining in the interest of as many employees as possible. Trade unions have long been attached to the idea of defending work stability in one place, on a permanent contract, with the same employer responsible for everything. Other types of work have been perceived as a harmful departure from this norm. But this is now changing. Everyone who performs paid work needs their rights to be protected and so trade unions have begun to implement strategies to reach atypical workers, including platform workers.

We are dealing here with new workers operating in a grey zone. They are not traditional employees, nor are they entrepreneurs. In Poland, two years ago, we amended the Trade Unions Bill so that the self-employed not only have the right to join trade unions, but also to collective bargaining.

It is difficult for trade unions to represent the self-employed. How can we represent them effectively if they do not have rights to collective bargaining? This is a very important question for the future, for the EU.

The second priority area for us is migrant workers. Poland has become the largest net receiver of workers from outside the EU. They largely occupy the lowest ranks of the income ladder, including platform work. Most such people working in Poland are working for the Uber Eats platform.

Another key issue is multinational corporations, which are a big player in industrial relations. They have a huge impact, especially in Central and Eastern Europe and the Balkans.

Barbara Owsiak, Deputy Director General of the Employers of Poland

I would not like to live in a world in which workers' interests are not properly represented. One important point is education, which we should look at from the ground up. When I look back at my education, I was never told about trade unions and social dialogue. I think that social dialogue is a pillar for building social capital; it is in the interest of each country that social dialogue works properly.

The government can hinder or foster social dialogue. I thus appeal to the governments of the member states to foster social dialogue and not to hinder it.

Annick Hellebuyck, Senior Adviser at the Labour and Social Security Competence Centre of the Federation of Belgian Employers (FEB)

Social dialogue is not an end in itself, but a wonderful means to come up together with ways to balance economic and social interests, as well as on societal and environmental issues. Social dialogue has to focus on qualitative outcomes, consolidating the competitiveness of our companies while also creating quality jobs. In this perspective, we should support the independence of the social partners and not support organizations

or individuals that are not representative. When we enter into an agreement, we expect the other signatories to respect it, as there are no rights without obligations.

We expect the public authorities to develop a clear legal framework, giving an extensive margin to representative social partners to use collective bargaining to regulate working conditions and wages. Social agreements have enormous importance because they yield results on the ground. Each organization must ensure that its mandate reflects the social and economic interest of its members. As the Belgium Employers' Association, our number one challenge is to obtain a mandate.

I would like to provide a few examples of good practice. First of all, the public authorities are able to extend collective agreements to all employers through extension clauses. Another example is when a government respects the outcomes of social agreements without changing them unilaterally. Finally, social partners can have the power to establish social security contributions that will apply to the entire sector. If legislators wish to change the rules of the game in collective bargaining, they should do this together with the social partners with a view to respecting fundamental ILO principles.

Oscar Ernerot, Swedish Trade Union Confederation

Why is it difficult for unions today to recruit members? There is structural change of course, but it is not only that blue-collar workers are being replaced by white-collar workers. The blue-collar labour market is much more fragmented, including precarious work, short-time working and other forms of employment that make it much more difficult to join a union.

Another issue is compliance with collective agreements. Even though we have an autonomous social partnership model, we still need institutions, labour courts and so forth, that are well developed and function effectively.

Turning to the future, it is important to see the value of collective agreements, for instance on the hot topic of refugees. The social partners in Sweden have negotiated a collective agreement called 'Fast-track'. Instead of having refugees sitting in camps, they can combine work with learning Swedish. This scheme has been quite successful.

Another positive outcome concerns the platform economy, with a collective agreement for transport workers, in which the social partners agreed on a better work environment and a sustainable business model for the long term.

Milos Nenezic, Serbian Association of Employers

The main problem we face is emigration: young people, especially qualified young people, are leaving Serbia. We need to improve the education system. For example, the Chamber of Commerce, together with social employers, the Minister of Labour and the Minister of Education, have set up a dual system. College or university students, even some in high school, can work during their studies, receiving 70 per cent of normal pay. They are matched with a mentor. We anticipate positive effects on jobs and even the prevention of emigration. The second relevant initiative launched by the Minister of Labour two years ago is a coordination team to prevent people leaving the country, helping to identify the qualifications they need. Finally, the Social and Economic Council has adopted a national strategy on industrialization that will also show the way in terms of qualifications and for the future of young people.

On digitalization, which seems widespread in service sectors, I would like to see more digitalization or robotization in such dangerous occupations as fire services or construction, to prevent people from risking their lives.

Jaana-Hendrik Toomel, Estonian Trade Union Confederation

How can common ground be found between the social partners? In our view, digitalization should give us better jobs, better working conditions, and, for employers, it should give us better productivity and improve competitiveness. In the context of platform work, we see a new kind of precariousness arising. It is also bad for competition for so-called traditional employers.

Why is digitalization happening? Is it only to put pressure on prices, pushing short-term goals to the limit, or does it provide some greater value? Regulation must acknowledge that digitalization and optimization are not tools to enable social dumping, for example, regarding platforms, which we have seen in the Baltic countries. We need perhaps first to re-examine some terms and concepts. For example, who is a worker and who is an entrepreneur? Which self-employment is bogus and which is not? Once we have a clear understanding of these questions, it should be easier to solve these problems or improve legislation or regulations.

These issues affect not only workers but also taxes, healthy competition between companies, and the quality and sustainability of the services provided.

Finally, how to keep up with the changes at play in the labour market? We need to properly train the workers who will be affected by changes like digitalization and automation, and to do it in good time, not when it is already too late.

Kris De Meester, Federation of Enterprises in Belgium (FEB)

Can the social partners find common ground? The answer is, yes, through the current negotiations on a European Framework Agreement on Digitalization in the World of Work.

We had some difficult days at the start, but we built the first layer based on trust, and were then able to move ahead with problems, opportunities and measures. For the first time in a European Framework Agreement, we are proposing implementation of the agreement by a joint process between employers and workers.

The second step involves mapping the situation at the enterprise level. We need a broad approach that goes beyond a focus only on robots or digital technology. We also need to look at the impacts of digital technology, tools, communications and AI on job content and working conditions, such as terms of employment, working hours, work–life balance and health and safety.

The next step in the process is identifying measures, implementing them, joint monitoring, and evaluation.

There are four topics that we ask our employers and workers to take into account in the process: first, skills; second, artificial intelligence, machine learning and how they interact with human resources; third, the sensitive topic of connecting and disconnecting; and finally, surveillance and the uses of digital technology.

This process-based approach is innovative.

Esther Lynch, Deputy General Secretary, European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC)
Social dialogue is Europe's great competitive advantage. Social dialogue means that we will be able to tackle all of the changes we are facing better, faster and with fewer downsides.

Through the autonomy of social dialogue we are able to work together. There is a strong impetus in this direction, for example, in relation to resources and the provision of support, for example, in effective labour courts, options for mediation, or indeed negotiations. Autonomy looks very different in Stockholm and in Dublin, and is experienced differently. We need to think about laws to enable trade unions to do their work and to sanction employers who do not respect the right to collective bargaining.

At the EU level, we are on the verge of a big and meaningful autonomous social partner agreement to deal with the major challenges of digitalization in a fair and ethical way, tackling everything from the right to disconnect to the human-in-control principle. The main stumbling block in this respect concerns what is meant by 'workers' representative'? For me, this will always and only be my union. While there is a role for outside experts, the people in the driving seat for social dialogue and collective bargaining have always to be the trade unions. In Europe, people are afraid for themselves and for their future. They see people employed on difficult and uncertain contracts. Social dialogue right now is not tackling this problem or delivering practical solutions. We need to face up to these real problems and we need the support of governments to be able to conclude collective agreements at the workplace, sectoral, national or European level. And we need a bargaining partner willing to come to the table with us.

We need a strategy of solidarity with candidate countries. Everywhere a given employer operates, they should respect the union. The EU could also do much more about public procurement rules, to encourage those employers who are ready to sit down with unions and implement good terms and conditions. Finally, we cannot have a system where large platforms are not paying taxes or even paying social security contributions on their workers. There are so many elephants in the room, and social dialogue is the best way to get the elephants to do the right thing.

Robert Plamer, Senior Advisor, Social Affairs Committee, BusinessEurope

It is really important to give space to the social partners at national level to discuss and prepare responses to the labour market challenges we are facing. We recognize the variety of national industrial relations systems and the different roles that our members play within those systems.

Sweden is one of the best examples of very strong social partnership but, unfortunately, this is not the case everywhere. This is something that needs to be built from the grassroots up and cannot be imposed from the European level.

As European social partners, we try to play a supportive role, especially regarding capacity-building of national organizations to be able to engage in these processes at both national and European levels. In the European Social Fund Committee, we work very well together seeking to influence the programming of the Social Fund's resources towards capacity-building support for national social partners.

A subgroup of our social dialogue committee is working on the implementation of social dialogue agreements and capacity-building, and has invested lot of time and energy negotiating the Framework Agreement on Digitalization. But it is at the national level

that our members need the capacity and resources to follow up on those agreements together with the trade unions. We are therefore working in a number of member states, predominantly in central and eastern Europe, to strengthen the social partners' capacity for social dialogue and the implementation of agreements.

Guillaume Afellat, Policy Adviser for Social Affairs, Centre of Employers and Enterprises Providing Public services (CEEP)

The European social partners have been involved in a number of initiatives at the European level including negotiations on digitalization and discussions on adaptation to the new economy, on skills, health and safety, limits to work–life balance and various other issues addressed in this volume.

On the issue of the environmental transition, the structured cooperation of social partners at the regional level is essential, because many decisions will be taken given the need to adapt in different sectors to the new challenges and to changing and disappearing jobs. This will be a monumental challenge faced very differently across countries and regions.

We do not want tripartite cooperation to devour the space for collective bargaining at the national level. President Juncker rightly declared: *'there is no tripartite social dialogue without bipartite social dialogue'*. He referred specifically to the European social partners, and our ability to negotiate autonomous framework agreements, but it is extremely relevant at the national level as well.

It is dangerous to confuse tripartite and bipartite dialogue, but also civil society and social partners. As structured organizations, the social partners have unique expertise, responsibilities and mandate. This distinguished them from the realm and abilities of civil society. Such confusion can sometimes be instrumentalized by national governments when seeking the input of civil society rather than social partners.

The minimum wage represents an opportunity to support and reinforce collective bargaining. This should be the direction of EU action: supporting an additional, reinforcing social dialogue and collective bargaining for the definition of minimum wages at different levels.

Danny Van Assche, Vice-President, European Employers' Organizations for Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SME United)

Social partners and social dialogue have to prove their relevance, their efficiency, and their representativeness. This is a shared responsibility on both the employers' and the workers' sides.

This means, first, that we have to be able to conclude agreements based on listening to each other and finding common ground.

Second, we must show our representativeness, and our knowledge and understanding of the issues and interests of our members working in the real economy. We need to reach groups that are traditionally difficult to organize. SMEs constitute a very important group among these, because the majority of enterprises are SMEs and they employ approximately half of all workers in the European Union.

Certain EU countries, such as Belgium, have a very strong and representative SME organization which is an official partner in social dialogue. However, in others, the SME organization is not accepted as a partner in official social dialogue. Such a situation does not enhance the quality of social dialogue, because a self-employed

person or one who hires 5 or 15 or even 50 workers does not have the same interests as a multinational.

SME United has only quite recently been accepted as an official member of European social dialogue. We had to fight for our right to be at the negotiation table. SME organizations have a vital role to play in ensuring good and high quality social bargaining in Europe and in all European countries.

Matthias Thorns, Deputy Secretary General, International Organization of Employers (IOE)

Three main themes characterize our work at the international level. The first is taking a positive approach to the future of work: the positive impact on job creation, working conditions and flexibility. The future presents us with great opportunities that we must harness.

The second theme is skills. Some 60 per cent of girls and boys entering primary school today will end up in professions that do not exist yet. This shows how much the world of work is changing, and how our education system needs to be updated to ensure that school-leavers get into employment, that companies have the skills they need, and that countries have the potential for social and economic progress. Only through the full involvement of the social partners in the governance of education systems will it be possible to ensure that their outcomes are in line with labour market needs.

The final theme is the role of the social partners in the future of work. This transformation can never be managed without strong social partners. However, we have to reform in order to reach out beyond our core or traditional constituents. Social dialogue needs to be much more agile and become even more diverse when tackling the future of work, because employment relationships are becoming ever more diverse. There are many other instruments in addition to collective bargaining in the social dialogue toolbox. We have to look at what we want to achieve, and then determine which is the right format to use for social dialogue.

Owen Tudor, Deputy General Secretary, International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC)

When we talk about the future of work, we need to think of going forward to the past. In reality, there used to be a lot of individualized contracts until we decided to get rid of them. In the platform economy, for instance, Uber is actually the biggest multinational company in the world, employing 3 to 4 million people. These workers are difficult to protect because legal judgements vary from country to country. The more individualized workers' relations with employers become, the greater is the need for a framework to ensure fairness.

Since the millennium, the world has become three times richer in monetary terms. The real problem is the distribution of this wealth. This is one topic that the G20 has failed to address. However, we have succeeded in putting other issues such as jobs and inequality on the G20 agenda.

I would like to be optimistic about the opportunities offered by the future of work, not least the possibilities for digitalization to reduce the hours people have to spend at work. However, to ensure that this future of work is different from its past, we must have more effective social dialogue and a better working relationship between employers and unions.

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I believe the subject we are treating to be very timely, and that we have together hit the right spot. The project process – the close involvement of the social partners and the extension beyond the EU to include the candidate countries – is also to be applauded.

With respect to representativeness, I would highlight the remarks by the Swedish State Secretary regarding the need for balance, trust and space. A further important message is the need to get out of our comfort zone.

The remark made by the Portuguese Minister about strengthening the reputation of the social partners by making them more relevant again was also an interesting observation, pointing to the big issue of capacity-building for social partners, and how we can go about it in terms of legal frameworks, public procurement, taxation issues, and so on.

Another important issue concerns the need for agility in order to reach out to new groups of participants in social dialogue, such as young people and platform workers.

Autonomous social dialogue very much depends on the national context and traditions, and no one size fits all. The ILO is a repository of good practices, and governments can provide good, stimulating regulation as a basis for social dialogue.

There remains the question of how best to go about it at the various levels. The extension of collective bargaining and derogation clauses seems to be one of the battlegrounds in the discussion.

Regarding digitalization, the Commissioner has made it clear that he is a techno-optimist. The new world of work is bringing both challenges and many opportunities, including for social dialogue and for the representativeness of the social partners. And new types of work do not necessarily mean that the old tools are no longer relevant.

What are the new issues for social dialogue? Clearly these include migration and the creation of decent work in particular in the countries of origin, taxation issues in the platform economy, as well as global supply chains and skills and lifelong learning.

Allow me to turn to the way forward. First of all, the cooperation with the European Commission is very important to us in the ILO, because Europe is leading by example. This project and the present volume are very good examples of us working together.

Implementation is a critical issue, whether at the global level, the G20, the European level or the ILO level. The fact that implementation of the Agenda 2030 is lagging behind sends a clear message that we need urgently to act together.

All contributions in this volume resonate with the three priorities of our centenary declaration: investing in people, investing in labour institutions, and looking for sustainable and inclusive growth, including policy coherence. And a core issue for the ILO concerns a just transition to green jobs.

Finally, I will close by quoting Commissioner Schmit: *‘Social dialogue is a prerequisite of social justice.’* That is one of the ILO’s founding principles from 1919. Without social justice, we cannot protect our democracy.

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