

Breaking Through – UNI demands taken up by the G20 and the EU

UNI Global Union has for a long time cut across all discussions concerning social rights and the rise of non-standard employment. We have firmly demanded that all workers, in all forms of employment, should have the same social and fundamental rights. Nothing less. We have also demanded that all workers, in all forms of employment should have the rights and access to continuous re- and upskilling¹.

Whilst these demands were initially received by a few raised eyebrows, for UNIs Philip Jennings they are the only, sustainable and logical way forward. Jennings explains:

Our suggestions meet the fluidity of the future of work with a strong demand for security and rights for all. By demanding that all workers have the same rights, and not a quasi-mix of this or that, we also disincentivise corporations from firing employees and rehiring them as contractual workers or self-employed. Let's not get bogged down in endless academic discussions on what type of workers work where. All workers deserve the same rights. All workers must have access to re- and upskilling. Our companies must contribute. Our institutions must change. Rights must be portable across employment forms. Let's put an end to this silo distinction between an employee and the self-employed.

UNI Global's Jennings and Colclough have raised these issues in many fora the last year: from the ILO's Future We Want, to the L20, in the WEF, Davos, the European Parliament and Commission, and to the OECD. And now evidence is pouring in that the institutions are listening.

The European Commission is (slowly) shaping up

Whilst the EU Commission's European Pillar of Social Rights initiative that was launched on April 26, 2017 has received something of a pounding for lacking substance, they have opened a social partner consultation of the issue of social protection. As the Commission explains:

"Today people in self-employment constitute 15% of the workforce in EU Member States and people in non-standard employment form another 20-25%. In many Member States they are left without sufficient access to social protection and employment services and it is estimated they account for up to half of EU non-standard workers and self-employed.

For example, unemployment insurance is not accessible for the self-employed in 10 Member States. Almost a third of people on temporary full-time contracts in the EU do not qualify for unemployment benefits, ranging from more than 70% to less than 3%, depending on the Member State. As for sickness benefits, some 40% of the self-employed do not qualify, whereas for workers on fixed term

¹¹ See more here: www.thefutureworldofwork.org

contracts it is as little as 10% who are in this situation. Employment services for the self-employed, such as training, mentoring and advice, are only available in a small number of Member States.

The accumulated effects of such disparities in entitlements are likely to give rise to new inter- and intra-generational inequalities between those that have or manage to gain employment on standard contracts with full social rights and those who do not, which undermines the overall sustainability of the social protection systems.

The social partner consultation aims: *To ensure that people in all forms of employment have adequate [access] to social protection and employment services.²*

The partners will also be consulted on the revision of the so-called Written Statement Directive. The Commission acknowledges that many workers, including those on precarious contracts, do not receive a written confirmation of their working conditions, and that some practices are directly detrimental to workers. UNI Europa welcomes this consultation. At the EU Summit on November 17, these issues and more related to the Future World of Work will feature on the agenda. We will be prepared!

G20 Declaration paves the way to UNIs solutions

Along similar yet also more forceful lines, the G20 Labour and Employment Ministers have just issued a set of Declarations titled: **Towards an Inclusive Future: Shaping the World of Work³**. In the **Annex A: G20 Priorities on the Future of Work**, we are very pleased to read several key commitments from the Ministers.

Firstly, the Ministers recognise that: *lifelong learning and education and training programmes are key to help workers keep pace with technological and occupational changes, we will address the need of workers to reskill and upskill, including through multi-stakeholder partnerships, while paying specific attention to disadvantaged groups.*

They continue by adding that they: *recognise the role of employers in developing workers' skills, and, through partnership with government and workers' organisations, ensuring that education and skills systems meet the changing labour market demands and the needs of businesses.*

In their declaration they also acknowledge that measures to ensure a just transition to the new world of work are necessary.

Secondly, the declaration commits to: *Promoting adequate social protection and social security coverage for all workers, including those in non-standard forms of employment.*

We especially welcome the fact that the Ministers recognise “a growing need for policy solutions and coordination to ensure access to appropriate social protection for workers in all forms of employment and work arrangements” and their commitment to: “Promote non-discrimination and fair treatment in social protection systems amongst all different contractual arrangements including non-standard forms of employment” and their willingness to consider the portability of benefits.

² http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-17-1005_en.htm

³ <http://www.g20ewg.org/index.php/2015-07-09-20-38-21/lemm-declarations>

In the declaration the Ministers call on the importance of quality jobs, social dialogue and they key role of the labour market parties in facilitating a just transition to the new world of work.

Jennings comments:

All of this is music to my ears. We are witnessing foul attempts by many platforms and companies to erode quality jobs and social dialogue. Just look at the tribunal in London. It will determine the employment status of Deliveroo riders. Deliveroo appears with 8 suited and booted lawyers, claiming its riders prefer the flexibility of the gig economy over the benefits of being employed⁴. What nonsense! Across the world, companies are union bashing and exploiting workers. This has to stop. The G20 declaration firmly acknowledges that policies are needed to ensure a fair, just and sustainable world of work. Their commitments and acknowledgments are calling these foul practices out. We, the union movement, stand ready to engage in constructive, innovative solutions, and new partnerships.

UNI Global will continue to work with all the global institutions to make these insights and commitments happen. Next up, Jennings will be raising our points at the forthcoming June 13 High-Level Policy Forum on the New OECD Jobs Strategy in the presence of Ministers and employers. As we move towards Liverpool 2018 and our quest to find solutions to the future world of work continues, we can only be pleased to witness these important political changes. Now we all must push for their realisation. Jennings ends:

If you push your national governments, if you engage with your companies to find new solutions to re- and upskilling, then together we will Make This Happen. UNI has one of the strongest voices in this field. Let's amplify each other's voice across all of our countries, unions and companies. The momentum is here. UNI Europa's EU project on services and skills will add insight to our work, their Digital Footprint project too. Across our regions we must push. Let's get out there and do it.

⁴ <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/technology/2017/05/23/deliveroo-denies-riders-workers-gig-economy-tribunal-begins/?platform=hootsuite>