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WEC Positions

Joint letter of European Sectoral Social Partners on the EU Social Dialogue Review

Upcoming Events

7 June 2022

EU Think Tank
Conference on the Future of Work

9 June 2022

EU Public Employment Services Network of Public Employment Services New forms of support to employers

24 June 2022

Meeting of the European Business Services Alliance, a business network currently chaired WEC-Europe

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Global Public Affairs

WEC participates to ILO webinar on Ratification Campaign of C181

The ILO launched a ratification campaign that aims at raising awareness on the importance of the fundamental role played by the Private Employment Agencies Convention, 1997 (C181) and the Employment Service Convention, 1948 (C88) to have efficient and developed labour markets across countries.

Private employment agencies can offer critical support to employers and workers in adapting to economic crises and changes, assisting them in redeploying resources and navigating job transitions. A framework for effective regulation is provided by ILO C181.

On 12th May, the World Employment Confederation participated in a technical tripartite webinar to support further ratifications of Convention 181 and Convention 88 organised by the ILO Office. Denis Pennel (WEC Managing Director) spoke as part of the employers' delegation to highlight the positive impact of a ratification of C181 on better functioning labour markets.

Assessment and next steps:

The World Employment Confederation welcomed this timely ILO campaign as this is a step in the right direction.

The situation of the Private Employment Industry varies considerably across countries in terms of regulation, market development and acceptance. However, there are common challenges that still need to be faced:

- Inadequate level of regulation
- Need to sort out the ethical and law-abiding private employment agencies from the fraudulent and unethical ones

Need for stronger cooperation between PES and PrES to tackle current labour market issues (labour shortages, informality, low level of inclusion)

The International Labour Conference 2022 to open on May 27

The 110th Session of the International Labour Conference (ILC) will start on 27th May until 11th June. This year, the conference will cover those main topics:

- A Recurrent Discussion Committee on Employment as a follow up on the 2008 ILO Declaration on Social Justice for Fair Globalization.
- A Standard Setting Committee on Apprenticeships, to decide a framework on apprenticeships and the legal form of that framework, weather to have a Convention, Recommendation, or a Convention supplemented by a Recommendation.
- A possible amendment of the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work from 1998, to include safe and healthy working conditions.

- A General Discussion Committee on Decent Work at the Social and Solidarity Economy
- A Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations, whose works constitute the cornerstone of the ILO's supervisory system on international labour standards.

Assessment and next steps:

The World Employment Confederation and its member will participate in the event and contribute with its views to the different discussions.

It is of relevance to our industry to define the role for Private Employment Services within the framework of Apprenticeships.

Concerning the discussion on Employment, the World Employment Confederation would like to highlight the need of further coherence and partnerships between Private and Public Employment Services; and to take note of the key role of Private Employment Services in job creation, reduction of informality and inequality and the contribution to skilling and re-skilling of workers.

International Migration Review Forum, 16th May in New York

The Global Compact for Migration (GCM), adopted in 2018, is the first inter-governmentally negotiated non-binding agreement covering all aspects of international migration governance. The GCM offers States a comprehensive menu of options from which they can select policies and measure that ensure safe, orderly, and regular migration. The primary intergovernmental global platform through which all relevant stakeholders can share progress on the implementation of the GCM is the International Migration Review Forum (IMRF). Starting in May 2022, the President of the UN General Assembly will host an IMRF every four year.

The first International Migration Review Forum (IMRF) took place amidst an ongoing worldwide migration crisis, sparked by the Covid-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine. These developments have highlighted longstanding policy and governance gaps; exacerbated the skills shortages that persist in every region of the world; and intensified human rights vulnerabilities. They call for urgent review of labour migration processes to adapt to new realities.

The Business Advisory Group on Migration contributed to the discussion with a paper that put forward its recommendations towards the achievement of the objectives of the United Nations GCM. It addresses the role of the private sector in promoting coherent and comprehensive migration strategies and identifies the components of a well-balanced labour migration model.

The three main recommendations are:

- Flexible, transparent, and predictable labour mobility frameworks that respond to current and anticipated labour market needs;
- Regulatory frameworks that discourage informality and promote and ensure responsible recruitment of foreign workers;
- Improved systems for identification, recognition, and development of skills to promote skills mobility.

Assessment and next steps:

The World Employment Confederation is part of the Board of Business Advisory Group on Migration. The recommendation elaborated by the Group includes a specific mention to the need to have a proper regulation of the recruitment industry.

When regulated appropriately, private employment and recruitment services improve labour-market functioning by matching jobseekers to decent jobs, inside and across borders. Responsible recruitment provides new and sustainable job opportunities to a diverse workforce, creates more decent and productive work, and enhances fair and transparent business practices, all of which ultimately contribute to economic growth.

European Public Affairs

Digital labour platforms: European Parliament proposes significant changes to the European Commission proposal for a Directive

Following two hearings in the European Parliament, to which the World Employment Confederation-Europe contributed and presented key messages of our position on platform work, the EP Employment Committee rapporteur Elisabetta Gualmini presented her draft Report in May. The assessment of the report is mixed to negative. The rapporteur assesses the role of digital labour platforms mostly as negative, underlining the lack of protection and the risk of precarious work offered by digital labour platforms, thus failing to recognize the benefits of digital labour platforms.

The report also proposes to broaden the scope of the Directive, by using an even broader definition of platform work. The amendments on the employment status are assessed overall positively by the World Employment Confederation-Europe Head Office. It is encouraging to see the focus on the need to protect workers' rights, to recognise that services provided by digital labour platforms can be based on self-employment and on an employment status as a worker and that there is a need to ensure the correct classification.

The criteria that trigger an employment status have been moved from the Article 4 of the Directive to the recitals, which might give more room for tailored, national solutions. The European employers' community and several digital labour platforms with whom WEC-Europe was in touch assess the amendments on the section on automated decision-making critical. A new article on subcontracting liability in the context of digital labour platforms needs to be assessed carefully based on input of WEC-Europe members.

While provisions on subcontracting liability in platform work could reinforce the establishment of a level-playing field and avoid unfair competition, it needs to be questioned whether specific rules on subcontracting should be included in an EU Directive on platform work, considering the fact that there are already EU rules on subcontracting in the context of the provision of services and that digital labour platforms are more a way to provide a service rather than a new form of work. Finally, the World Employment Confederation-Europe welcomes a new provision on promoting collective bargaining in platform work broadly welcomed.

Assessment and next steps:

Despite some positive elements, the overall approach taken in the European Parliament is critical and negative, reflecting the views of the S&D party group and the left spectrum of the European Parliament. The report will be discussed in the European Parliament in the coming months, with further amendments and changes to be proposed by Committee members and the search for compromises among the Members of the European Parliament.

At EU Council level, discussions are at an early phase with the French Presidency with a questionnaire that was sent by the French Presidency to the national government. The overall legislative debate is expected to last until 2023/2024, followed by the national implementation phase.

Inclusive labour markets: WEC-Europe gives a presentation to European employers' community on the role of private employment services industry in addressing skills shortages

On the topic of inclusive labour markets, skills and shortages, the World Employment Confederation-Europe was invited as guest speaker to a meeting of the European cross-industry employers' organisation BusinessEurope. Michael Freytag focused in his presentation on the benefits of diverse forms of work to match labour market needs, the role of bipartite training funds and skills policies to meet current and future labour market needs and the need to increase labour market participation especially for young people, as youth unemployment is too high in European countries, such as Italy, Spain and Greece.

BusinessEurope is currently working on an analytical paper on skills and labour shortages. Skills mismatches and shortages are also of key importance at the European Commission level following the recently presented European Commission initiatives on skills, labour market matching and inclusive labour markets.

Assessment and next steps:

The invitation and speaking opportunity for the World Employment Confederation-Europe was instrumental to present and discuss the role of the private employment services industry in skills and labour market matching and its role in addressing labour market shortages. In the third quarter of 2022, the World Employment Confederation-Europe will publish a policy paper on the role of the private employment services industry in addressing and tackling labour market mismatches and shortages.

Inclusive labour markets: WEC-Europe contributes to EU Expert meeting of the European Labour Authority on the integration of displaced workers and refugees

On 18th and 19th May 2022, the World Employment Confederation-Europe participated in an EU Expert Group on the integration of displaced workers and refugees. The main EU instruments such as the temporary protection Directive including operational guidance to Member States, guidelines on the recognition of qualifications, the EU CARE initiative providing funding to EU Member States and the role of public and private employment services were discussed at this meeting. A key challenge identified was the risk for displaced workers and refugees to end up in informal and undeclared work.

The World Employment Confederation-Europe had a speaking slot, being able to highlight the role of the private employment services industry in offering support and assistance to displaced workers and refugees, highlighting also the initiatives taken by World Employment Confederation-Europe members. Michael Freytag also stressed the importance of work for stability, hope and income for refugees and displaced people from Ukraine.

Assessment and next steps:

Whereas the first two months of the war in Ukraine, the World Employment Confederation-Europe was focusing mostly on supporting its members most affected by the Ukraine crisis and on gathering practices of World Employment Confederation members, focus is expanding since May on actions to share the information and practices gathered to EU institutions, EU social partners, and stakeholders.

EU Sectoral Social Dialogue: WEC-Europe contributes to the EU Sectoral Social Dialogue Review and works with UNI-Europa on the submission of a new joint project

At this stage, there are several important developments and activities linked to the EU Sectoral Social Dialogue on temporary agency work. To respond to the crisis following the war in Ukraine, the World Employment Confederation-Europe and UNI-Europa continued the dialogue on the impact of the refugee crisis on labour markets and possible joint statement and commitment of the Sectoral Social Partners for temporary agency work. UNI-Europa has been reluctant at the start, stating that the refugee crisis following the conflict in Ukraine goes beyond the mandate of UNI-Europa and the sector of temporary agency work and has both a global and European dimension. These reservations and concerns have been addressed and overcome in a meeting with the Regional Secretary of UNI-Europa, Oliver Roethig and the Director in charge of temporary agency work, Dimitris Theodorakis. Sonja van Lieshout, Executive Committee member of WEC-Europe and Michael Freytag prepared a revised draft joint statement and concrete commitments based on existing, national initiatives. The aim would be to conduct negotiations on the joint statement and commitments in May and June to reach an agreement before the summer break.

Following the publication of a related EU call for proposals, the World Employment Confederation-Europe and UNI-Europa are currently preparing a project proposal for submission in June. For the new project on capacity building in training, working conditions and social protection, a series of regional seminars shall be organised over a period of two years to share national experience and share best-practice. Practical guidance shall be developed and provided to national social partners.

Finally, the World Employment Confederation-Europe is continuing to contribute to the ongoing review of the EU Sectoral Social Dialogue. This is a large-scale initiative of the European Commission / DG Employment aiming to look at the structure, representativeness, organisation and output of the European Sectoral Social Dialogue. There are several, concerning developments including ideas of clustering existing EU sectoral social dialogue committee potentially using the trade union organisations as template (with trade unions covering industry sectors and services sectors), the potential outsourcing of the organisation of sectoral social dialogue committee meetings from the European Commission to the EU Sectoral Social Partners and an approach of looking at the representativeness, effectiveness and outputs of EU Sectoral Social Dialogue Committees. For the last dimension, it is encouraging to see that the EU Sectoral Social Dialogue on temporary agency work is assessed by the European Commission as representative, active and delivering good outcomes based on joint research, joint statements and recommendations and joint conference and events.

Assessment and next steps:

The EU Sectoral Social Dialogue on temporary agency work is instrumental for the WEC-Europe advocacy strategy in 2022. Work on the next joint project and on a joint statement and commitment on the refugee crisis are essential to position the private employment services industry, to support World Employment Confederation-Europe members and to contribute to EU policy debates.

Abbreviations

DG	Director General / Policy Department of the European Commission
EU	European Union
ILO	International Labour Organisation
GCM	Global Compact for Migration