



#EthicsGroup_EU



© European Union, 2018 | Image source: © iStockphoto.com/46728705, 2018 Fotokom

► PROGRAMME

OPEN ROUND TABLE

The Future of Work

5 February 2018

Robert Schuman Room, Berlaymont

European Group on Ethics
in Science and New Technologies



Research and
Innovation

Ursula Huws

Professor of Labour and Globalisation

u.huws@herts.ac.uk

University of
Hertfordshire **UH**

The historical context

- Most European welfare systems have evolved from norms laid down in the mid 20th century,
- designed to complement labour markets in which jobs were deemed to be
 - Full time
 - Permanent
 - Requiring the same skills over a working lifetime
- And embedded in national economies where most employers were represented by national employer confederations and most workers by national trade unions/confederations
- The working population was clearly divisible into those employed, those unemployed and those economically inactive
- The unemployed were seen as employees who had fallen on hard times (because of sickness, disability or redundancy)
- The employed were divisible into self-employed and employees
- As labour markets became more complex (not least because of the growing labour market participation of women with caring responsibilities) further differentiation was introduced between full-time and part-time and permanent and temporary employment
- Nevertheless the normative model was strong enough for these forms to be regarded as 'atypical'

The situation since the financial crisis

A convergence of several pre-existing trends reaching critical mass, linked with digitalisation and globalisation

- Use of online platforms for managing work
- Development of a global 'reserve army' of workers equipped with digital skills and speaking global languages
- Further evolution of global outsourcing of digital work – extending to SMEs the advantages previously only available to large corporation (through business models that absorb transaction costs of intermediation and charge a rent for use)
- Formalisation of the informal economy, bringing casual workers within the disciplinary scope of online platforms
- The 20th century normative model is no longer fit for purpose

Research evidence

- Rapid growth of a range of just-in-time forms of work
- ‘crowd workers’ are typically combining this form of work with many other means of income generation
- Definitions of crowd work are fuzzy, with many overlaps with other forms of temporary, agency and casual work
- The new working poor combine ‘new’ and ‘old’ forms of work as well as other forms of income but remain largely outside scope of existing protections
- Meanwhile many of the practices of the ‘gig economy’ are spreading to other sectors of the labour market, including:
 - Expectations to be available 24/7
 - Use of customer ratings
 - Expectation to meet quantitative performance targets
 - Monitoring and tracking of workers
 - Use of ‘apps’ for communication with employers and clients, summons to work and logging of working hours
 - Deterioration in working conditions and health and safety coverage – especially psycho-social risks

Towards a new regulatory model for 21st century labour markets?

- Need for universal coverage
- Clarification of the definition of self-employment – for employment, tax and social protection purposes
- Clarification of the definition of subordinate employment. All workers not deemed self-employed to be regarded as subordinate workers with the onus of proof on the employer. Workers' rights to be clearly specified in relation to *inter alia*:
 - Health and safety – including rights to call in inspectors
 - Insurance and legal liability
 - Data protection
 - Communications with employers/platforms, including rights to challenge arbitrary suspensions, customer ratings etc.
 - Other national statutory rights
- Clarification of the definition of private employment agencies and temporary work agencies. Online platforms to be regarded as such by default with the onus proof on the platform?.
- Need for inspection and compliance, with clear reporting procedures and realistic penalties for failure to comply.
- Adjustment of social security and tax systems to fit the new labour market realities

For further information: <http://www.feps-europe.eu/assets/08673ebb-ca52-4a65-a7d7-d82c9542d957/europeagigeconomy-longversionpdf.pdf>

WORK IN THE EUROPEAN GIG ECONOMY

