

Meeting of Experts on Work and Society

A contribution to the Future of Work Initiative

BACKGROUND

This proposed meeting of Experts aims to contribute to the Future of Work Initiative, with a special focus on one of the centenary conversations: **“Work and Society”**. While the importance of this thematic conversation is widely appreciated, ILO’s current knowledge is relatively limited, particularly on recent developments. The meeting of Experts is an effective way of filling these knowledge gaps by bringing together leading experts from different parts of the world. It is also a unique opportunity to reflect upon the issue of work and society from multi-disciplinary perspectives, which will be essential in the discussion of the Global Commission on the Future of Work.

This meeting of Experts is organized by the Future of Work Unit in collaboration with the International Training Centre in Turin (ITCILO). It is financed through South-South Technical Cooperation (SSTC) funding¹, the FOW unit, DG/POL and EUROPE RO.

OBJECTIVE OF THE MEETING OF EXPERTS

The objective of the meeting is to understand the current analysis, thinking and debates on the issue of work and society from leading experts and to propose a list of major issues for the consideration of the Global Commission. Experts are expected to discuss how the meaning of work has evolved and how it has impacted on society (and vice versa) in both developing and developed worlds. The meeting of Experts will also examine the opportunities to reclaim the centrality of work in the quest for personal and social development. In doing so, the meeting will take into consideration the different aspects of issues such as: work and material well-being, societal changes, ideology, personal development, dignity and cultural aspects, work-life balance, consumer awareness, stress management, burnout and harassment, among other issues.

¹ In the past decade, SSTC has become a consolidated practice through both the implementation of projects coordinated by developing countries’ cooperation agencies, and commitments made at the international level to boost this type of cooperation. Such commitments include the recent 2015 Addis Ababa Action Agenda, as well as UN General Assembly commitments. From an ILO perspective, SSTC is a horizontal and solidarity-driven means to promote and implement the Decent Work Agenda in the context of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, in particular SDG 8 and SDG 17 .

OUTPUT

The output of this meeting will be a report on Work and Society that will include a perspective from both developed and developing countries, including a perspective from the Global South that will be used as one of the materials that will feed the work of the Global Commission. There will also be visual reporting of the meeting.

Before the meeting, each of the invited experts will submit a short note (1-5 pages) which will summarize his or her findings and views.

AGENDA OF THE MEETING OF EXPERTS

The meeting of Experts will kick off with a keynote address by the Director-General or DDG/P of the ILO. Next, two successive panel discussions will be convened on the issue of Work and Society. Tripartite constituents, external and internal (to the ILO) experts will participate in these panels.

Questions to be addressed in the panels, including when relevant a South-South perspective²:

The individual of the future

- What does it mean to people to work and is the meaning of work changing (path from the “industrial man” to working women and men)? How is this meaning different in different countries? How is the changing role of women influencing the individual’s role in society?
- How does the 24/7 economy affect the individual? And how does the possibility of having flexible working arrangements influence the life of individuals? What about work-life balance? How to address unpaid work?
- Is health (beyond occupational health) improving/deteriorating (stress and burn out)? How will it evolve?
- Is an increased mobility and access (physical and virtual) changing peoples’ (working) lives?
- Leisure, arts and sports.

² The main objectives of the Future of Work Initiative vis-à-vis SSTC consist in: generating a better understanding of the forces transforming the world of work how SSTC can support this change processes in a new development cooperation environment; articulating and promoting policy alternatives, innovative partnerships and good practices that can be replicated by governments, employers and workers and other key partners in countries of the Global South through SSTC.

How is society changing? And what is the purpose of work?

- To work or not to work? Alternatives to livelihoods, basic income³, social protection⁴, working time⁵.
- How is the change in demographics (older population, migrants, etc.) influencing the labour market today and in the future?
- How will culture and religion influence work in the future? Including the meaning of being unemployed or underemployed
- Which is the impact of technological changes on productivity/inequality? In developed and developing economies?
- How are environmental issues influencing the future of work?
- **Do we need a new social model**

The above questions should be examined through a developed / developing country point of view, making use of the multicultural characteristics and experiences of the participants.

³ Universal basic income: providing everyone in the country with an income floor (with enough money to meet basic needs). Or “non-universal” basic income that only targets part of the population?

⁴ Social protection bound to an employment or a civil right?

⁵ Full time: 8 hours per week? Or other?