

# Fourth industrial revolution and impact on labour market



This working paper gives an overview of the new possibilities opened up by the 4th industrial revolution and tackles some specific questions in relation to its effects on the labour market, including on the status of employees, on working conditions and on training. It examines the role that trade unions can play in the digital economy and the main initiatives already proposed at European trade union level in this context.

According to its author, we are heading towards an increasingly polarised society with on one side the few 'winner-takes-all superstars' and on the other side the masses of 'losers'. In such a society, the middle class is to be weakened, with the disappearance of a large number of medium-skilled jobs and the appearance of a new class of 'digital galley slaves' performing lower-skilled and lower-content tasks.

It is in this context and to avoid being plunged back into social conditions similar to the 18th century that labour organisations in many European countries are calling for social dialogue to regulate the digital economy.

According to C. Degryse, digitalisation of the economy is not a new phenomenon. What made a tremendous change was the marriage between Big Data and robotisation, which led to the emergence of a wide variety of flexible and non-standard forms of work and business models: a new world of work is ahead, on which he shares 4 key findings:

- Digitalisation of the economy is leading to the creation

of new jobs, through the creation of new sectors, new products and new services.

- New forms of jobs are emerging, with new risks and increasingly porous working/private life boundaries, new types of machine/worker interactions, and impacts on management.

- Computerisation, automation and robotisation are leading to the disappearance of jobs. The trend is to intensify and a very high number of jobs will be lost.

- The development of digital platforms and crowd working is leading to a wave of shift of jobs, as workers (including high-skilled workers) from countries with high levels of social protection are brought into competition with workers from countries with low levels of protection and from developing countries.

This paper is one of the background publications for a three-day conference 'Shaping the new world of work' organised by the ETUI and the ETUC in June 2016. This conference brought together the best experts on social issues related to the digitalisation of the economy.



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