



## Tenth European Regional Meeting

Istanbul, Turkey, 2–5 October 2017

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### Concept note

#### Special plenary debate 4

##### Work and society

###### *Aim*

This debate is invited to identify necessary components of future social models/contracts in the region, and the roles and responsibilities of tripartite constituents within these.

###### *Context*

People in Europe and Central Asia are deeply aware of great changes affecting not only their environment, but also their daily working life. Although such trends have developed over the last decades, we face an accelerated pace of change that is offering risks, opportunities and improvements.

In the past, the region has produced social models that have inspired many worldwide. However, there is now widespread concern that these models no longer work and may need “updating”, if not a complete “redesign”. The world and the region are changing rapidly. New players have emerged in a more diverse and polycentric world. Economic and social models have been deeply transformed by a variety of forces.

At the same time, economic and refugee crises have instilled increasing scepticism towards the uneven results of globalization. In a number of countries, there is a gap between policy-makers and the perceptions people have of the situation. This has triggered a progressive erosion of the relationship between the State and its citizens as well as their trust in institutions. Globalization and the financialization of the economy have shifted the balance between labour and capital, thus contributing to more inequalities, as shown, for example by the “hollowing out” of the middle class in several countries of the region. Many people fear technological changes and a possible dehumanization of working life, which might culminate in some kind of new “economic slavery”. These fears are kindled by emerging new forms of employment, digitalization and robotization, although offering new opportunities as well.

Moreover, the notion of work has been evolving over time. A single job for life seems no longer the rule and the concepts of labour and workplace are changing. Personal development and well-being associated with a job or a career has become the norm. Women’s participation in the labour market, increased mobility and the 24/7 economy have created new possibilities in terms of income and personal development. At the same time,

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such evolutions are blurring the lines between work and private life and may trigger more stress and insecurity.

In times of uncertainties, the question of adequate coverage by social protection, and in particular income security, is becoming an increasingly critical issue. Rendering this issue more complex is the essential role of unpaid work in societies, and especially that of women as caregivers. On a broader scale, there is a need for thinking about roles and responsibilities in societies, with a view to ensuring effective and sustainable social protection and redistribution systems.

That is why many countries are reconsidering existing economic and social models. People also want responses to their questions and fears, and they want a say in how their societies should be shaped. It is therefore important to return to the ILO founding principles. An essential feature of the Social Justice Declaration is the choice given to each member State to determine the best way to achieve decent work according to its national context, culture, needs and priorities. There is certainly no “one-size-fits-all” model.

### ***Potential questions for consideration***

- What type of society or societies do people want in the future? What economic and social models can effectively deliver decent work, including sustainable social protection for all?
- What should be the place and the value of work? Are there viable alternatives to work? If so, what are they?
- How can more freedom, mobility and flexibility be reconciled with the need for income security, social protection and cohesion?
- What would be the respective responsibilities of governments, employers’ and workers’ organizations, enterprises, unions, workers, citizens, as well as all categories of taxpayers, to make future social models work?