



*Technopolis - Tatjana Guznajeva, Juanita Garcia Gutierrez, Ana Oliveira, Matthias Ploeg*

## Effective tripartite co-operation between trade unions, employers' organisations and the government ensures decent working/employment conditions of employees during job transformation

The trade unions and other organisations that represent the collective voice of employees are key organisations that advocate for the rights and decent working/employment conditions of employees. The analysis of data across the case studies and the consultations with the trade unions revealed that the working/employment conditions of employees during job transformation are at risk in many organisations. The major challenge stems from a lack of awareness about the rights, standards and obligations of employers and employees in workplaces. This is aggravated by the fact that the number of labour inspectorates has been declining across the EU Member States. Thus, the practices that organisations adopt in workplaces are rarely checked. In addition, employees and trade unions might lack access to qualified legal advice and support. In view of this, the European Trade Union Confederation and other stakeholders argue that there is a strong need to create a user-friendly online platform that will serve as a one-stop-shop on work-related regulations and other support. Such platform would enhance awareness of the stakeholders and prevent/reduce unlawful, inappropriate practices related to work.

It is important to note that in most examined case studies the trade unions and industrial relations between employers and employees are weak. Given other above-listed factors (i.e., limited labour inspection, low monitoring and analysis of job transformation impacts on workplaces) the policymakers are poorly informed and struggle to design effective regulations and policies for employers and workers. The weakness of the representative institutions stems from low activity of trade unions, their fragmentation, and a lack of leverages to influence the decisions of employers. In view of interviewees, it reflects the local culture, influenced by political priorities and promoted values.

Among the ten regional case studies, the region in Denmark (North Jutland) has the strongest tradition of tripartite co-operation. The Danish labour market regularly relies upon tripartite agreements and not on state regulation of working, employment conditions. The culture of mediation and collaboration has been supporting the dialogue, effective identification of challenges and the co-design of solutions by all social partners involved. To illustrate, given that shortage of workers in North Jutland, the employers' and employees' organisations



*Technopolis - Tatjana Guznajeva, Juanita Garcia Gutierrez, Ana Oliveira, Matthias Ploeg*

agreed to allow students between the age of 13 and 17 to be engaged in part-time work.<sup>1,2</sup> Another good practice can be illustrated in Malta. It highlights importance of collaboration between employers and employees in understanding workplace challenges from different perspectives, sharing these challenges and good practices with wider audience, engaging with relevant stakeholders in lasting cooperation, developing concrete actions and ensuring leadership on implementation of actions.

In 2013, Malta Employers' Association together with Richmond Foundation, an NGO that offers support to people experiencing mental health problems, have launched a project "MEA-EQUIP – Equipping SMES for a More Diverse, Equal and Inclusive Labour Market".<sup>3</sup> The project aimed to help employers through capacity building measures to research, learn and discuss how diversity, equality and inclusion makes business sense and is good for business, rather than being just a mere legal or social obligation. The activities of the project (i.e., informational and educational measures) focused on raising awareness on mental health issues in the workplace, supporting employee well-being and personal development, but also the success of businesses.

Besides employers from various organisations, the project involved other stakeholders, such as the KNPD (Commission for Persons with Disability), NCPE (Commission for Equality) and relevant NGOs. As a result, the project led to more fruitful partnerships among key stakeholders in the field of employment and also equipped MEA and employers to play a more effective role in social dialogue.

Among the success factors of the project are listed:

- Involvement of key and diverse stakeholders improved understanding of challenges faced by employers and employees and ensured lasting cooperation, support and commitment to diversity, equality and inclusion at workplaces;
- Discussion of the project and its results in various events, forums and in media drew attention of a wider community of employers and employees to the project and to the topic in focus, and stimulated the development of a more collaborative culture and climate in organisations. The project led to production of 6 social dialogue TV programmes to discuss the challenges and success stories of equality and inclusion in the business world;

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.thelocal.dk/20230202/how-many-teenagers-work-part-time-in-denmark-and-what-jobs-do-they-have>

<sup>2</sup> <https://businessindenmark.virk.dk/guidance/employment-and-dismissal/working-hours/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.maltaemployers.com/equip-esf-project/>



*Technopolis - Tatjana Guznajeva, Juanita Garcia Gutierrez, Ana Oliveira, Matthias Ploeg*

- Based on project results, the employers' association has developed a concrete action plan and digital HR guidelines that were later distributed among employers;
- Malta Employers' Association set an example by introducing various infrastructural interventions to its premises, including the installation of a lift, the construction of new, suitable and fully accessible toilet facilities and the introduction of a flexible ramp, to make the place fully accessible, especially to wheelchair bound, persons with disability.

Several consulted interviewees highlighted that it is important for employers to ensure high job satisfaction among employees, as it stimulates greater productivity and higher retention rate. Moreover, it supports the development of a collaborative culture and allows to address challenges in a cooperative and constructive manner. In some regions, such as Prague, the adoption of automation technologies has been faced with scepticism and raised concerns among the general population about job transformation and job displacement. An effective tool to address this has been open communication and training on benefits of technologies for work and for economy, generally.