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WEC Publications

WEC Strategic Issue Paper on agency work in healthcare

WEC opinion piece on agency work in healthcare

Upcoming Events

5 October: ETUI Conference on the New Social Contract

10 – 12 October: WEC Strategic Board meeting including a discussion on the next strategic plan

23 October: EU Conference on the Posting of Workers

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Global Public Affairs

OECD Report on skills and education published

The OECD published on 12 September the Education at a Glance Report 2023 assessing the education and training systems in the OECD countries. The Report underlines that 44% of all upper-secondary students are enrolled in vocational education and training. Despite this rather high percentage, vocational education and training are still seen as secondary choice or last resort in too many countries. Vocational education, including dual learning, can help to bridge the gap between education and employment and facilitate the transition from education to work. Investment in VET should, therefore, be prioritised according to the OECD. The OECD also underlines the importance of better and earlier career guidance to help young people explore more employment opportunities, including workplace visits for students and learners. The full report "Education at a Glance" can be downloaded on the OECD website.

Assessment

The OECD Education at a Glance Report is overall welcomed by the World Employment Confederation. The focus on vocational education and on career guidance and support are essential for young people to navigate complex and dynamic labour markets, and the HR services industry provides an important contribution in meeting the demand for a skilled workforce and supports workers adapting to the changing labour market.

WEC Strategic Research Project launched

The World Employment Confederation launched in September its new Strategic Research Project, which will be conducted until Spring 2024 in cooperation with FT Longitude (the research institute associated with the Financial Times). The project is designed to develop a new narrative for the HR services industry and promote the positive contribution of the sector to well-functioning labour markets, with a special focus on the vital role of the HR services industry as a talent expert in an era of transformative change.

The project will use primary research to shine a spotlight on how this industry adapts to change, sources and matches talent, facilitates seamless transitions, fuels job creation, and drives skilling, upskilling, and reskilling initiatives. It will also include a survey to be conducted amongst 500 C-suite executives from 15 countries. With a particular focus on labour mobility, delivering decent work, and fostering inclusion, the project will recognise the critical contribution that the HR services industry can make to tackle the imminent challenges of global labour markets in the next decade. Through the research, the industry's resilience and potential amid the disruptive forces shaping the world of work shall be illustrated.

Assessment

The new strategic research project is a key milestone of the 2021 – 2023 WEC Strategic Plan to support the strategic growth agenda for the HR services industry worldwide. The first findings of the project will be available in Q1/2024 and will be followed up by a dissemination and communication campaign, including actions at global, European and national levels.

ILO – WEC webinar to promote further ratification of Convention 181 to be held in Egypt

The World Employment Confederation is working together with the ILO to promote further ratifications of the ILO Convention 181 on private employment agencies. Following the regional webinar on Latin America in Q2/2023, a further webinar shall be organized on 7 November with a focus on Egypt and how to gain the support of national government to promote the ratification of C181.

In September 2023, the World Employment Confederation has been in close contact with the ILO Office in Geneva and with our Egyptian member Target HR to develop the programme for this online event, secure the commitment of ILO speakers and agree on the strategic objectives of the event. Besides industry experts and ILO officials, the event shall also include the participation of government officials from Egypt to ensure an impactful event promoting further ratifications of Convention 181.

Assessment

The renewed commitment of the ILO Office to promote the ratification of Convention 181 is a welcomed and positive development under the current ILO Director General Gilbert Houngbo. The first webinar in 2023 was implemented successfully, and the WEC Head Office will work towards a successful online event in November focusing on Egypt.

ILO published analysis on progress towards UN Sustainable Development Goal 8

On 15 September 2023, the ILO published an analysis of the progress made around the world towards the UN Sustainable Development Goal No. 8. The analysis concludes that the world is well on track to meeting the SDG 8 indicators. SDG 8 aims to promote sustainable, inclusive and sustained economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all. The analysis and Policy Brief published by the ILO furthermore underlines that while there is progress in many areas, progress is lagging behind in the economic dimensions, especially with regard to just transitions, more integrated policy approaches, addressing unsustainable debt burden, the promotion of decent work and social justice for example through the Global Coalition for Social Justice.

Assessment

The ILO policy brief provides valuable information on the UN Sustainable Development Goal No. 8, which is an instrumental framework for promoting the contribution of the private employment services industry to better functioning labour markets.

European Public Affairs

EU State of the Union Speech delivered by EU Commission President von der Leyen

The 2023 State of the Union Address of EU Commission President von der Leyen delivered during the September 2023 European Parliament plenary session has set out priorities and a clear vision for the EU to move forward. Getting back to the founding ideas and vision of Europe to promote stability and peace in Europe. The EU Commission President underlined that responding to the call of history is even more important in today's challenging times. Besides geopolitics, there is a strong need to focus on the ecological and green transition, supporting companies and workers to move to a carbon-neutral economy. To reach these goals, investment in skills and managing economic transitions is crucial. Similar to the green transition, the digital transition and the use of artificial intelligence must be framed by well-designed policies, capitalising on the benefits of artificial intelligence while also managing risks to ensure a human-centred approach to technology and artificial intelligence. Against this background, the EU has proposed the EU Artificial Intelligence Act, the first international legal instrument on AI, which is in the final phase of political debate.

The EU Commission President underlined that Europe needs progress on a geopolitical union, responding to the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine, mitigating the impact of inflation, managing refugee flows and migration and progress on EU enlargement and ensuring security in Europe. Ursula von der Leyen concluded by stating "It's time for Europe to think big and write our own destiny!"

Assessment:

The State of the Union Speech of the EU Commission President has set the right priorities for the coming year and was interpreted by several commentators as an informal candidacy for a second term as EU Commission President. While von der Leyen did not explicitly refer to her intentions to run again, many understood the priorities outlined also as a programme for the next European Commission after the European Parliament elections in 2024. Others indicated that von der Leyen might be interested to take up the position of the NATO Secretary General, which also will have to be filled in 2024.

EU Presidency Conference on the Future of Work and Social Dialogue

From 21st to 22nd September 2023, the current Spanish EU Council Presidency held a high-level Conference on the Future of Work and Social Dialogue. Sessions focus on democracy at work, artificial intelligence at the workplace, the green transition and the role of social dialogue.

With a focus on the future of work, artificial intelligence and automated decision and social dialogue, the conference addresses several strategic priorities for the private employment services industry and the World Employment Confederation. Against this background and based on contacts with the Spanish EU Council Presidency and with the European cross-industry employers' organisation BusinessEurope, WEC-Europe secured an invitation for the industry at the high-level event.

Assessment:

The Conference offered an important opportunity to network with key European and national policymakers and to convey the WEC messages on the future of work and social dialogue. Besides insightful keynote speeches and panel debates, the conference offered valuable networking opportunities, including bilateral meetings with officials from DG Employment of the European Commission, the OECD and representatives of European cross-industry social partners. A more detailed report on the event is available via the WEC members area.

Launch of EU sectoral social dialogue project on capacity building

On 18 September 2023, an important step was taken in the context of the EU Sectoral Social Dialogue with the launch of the new project on capacity building and the publication of the call for tender to launch the project. The capacity building project is a follow-up on the project on "Social Innovation in the Agency Work Industry", and while the first project aimed at building up the compendium of national practices of sectoral social partners, the new project aims to strategically strengthen and empower the sectoral social partners especially in Eastern and southern Europe to develop their capacity to develop new forms of working, learning and social protection. Regional workshops will be held in 2024 and 2025, and guidance will be developed for the social partners at the national level to strengthen their capacity and collective bargaining.

Assessment:

The World Employment Confederation-Europe and UNI-Europa have a long tradition of working together in the context of the EU Sectoral Social Dialogue on joint projects, with recent projects focused on digital labour platforms, as well as on social innovation in the temporary agency work. The new project will build on these past achievements while at the same time strengthening the sectoral social dialogue at the national level.

Nordic Network meeting held in Copenhagen

The WEC Head Office participated in the bi-annual Nordic Network meeting held in Copenhagen on September 11th and 12th, 2023. This gathering brought together national federations from Denmark, Sweden, Norway, and Finland, which shared insights into their respective economic, political, and regulatory landscapes and exchanged practical advice to tackle the challenges faced by the national HR services sectors.

During the meeting, WEC provided an overview of current EU legislative developments, including the dialogues on the AI Act and Platform Work, as well as a critical assessment of the influence of the TimePartner case on the Temporary Agency Work Directive.

On the second day, Thomas Gleerup, CEO of Edda Group and special guest at the meeting, offered an analysis of the Nordic labour market from a company's perspective. He underscored the pressing need to transform the sector's image, proposing the creation of new collaborations and strategies.

Assessment:

The Nordic Network meeting is a recurrent event among the national federations of Norway, Sweden, Finland and Denmark, which aims to foster constructive dialogue and share best practices of the countries' HR services sectors. The World Employment Confederation – Europe is invited to these meetings to contribute to the improvement of Nordic labour markets.

Useful Publications

- ILO Policy Brief on the Sustainable Development Goal No. 8 (September 2023)
- OECD: Report Education at a Glance 2023 (September 2023)
- EU: Report on mobile seasonal workers and intra-EU labour mobility (July 2023)

Abbreviations

EU	European Union
FT	Financial Times
ILO	International Labour Organisation
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development