BRIEFING

EPRS Ideas Paper

Thinking about future EU policy

The future of work

Trends, challenges and potential initiatives

SUMMARY

The current coronavirus pandemic and its accompanying health and economic crises have highlighted and heightened certain trends and challenges which were already affecting the labour market in Europe. These include accelerated digitalisation and automation, increased use of artificial intelligence, constraints relating to a lack of digital skills, and problems concerning the status of platform workers and other workers in non-standard forms of employment. In parallel, there has been an unprecedented expansion in teleworking, and in the development of transport and delivery platforms, as a result of the need for social distancing during the pandemic. Many of these changes will outlive the current crisis and generate in turn new challenges, which the EU and Member States will need to address.

Introduction: Labour market trends before the crisis

At the end of 2019, before the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic and the containment measures that followed, the employment rate of people aged 20 to 64 in the EU-27 stood at 73.1 %, the highest annual average recorded for the EU since 2005. The target of 75 %, set out in the 2020 strategy was within reach, with 17 Member States already achieving it. Strong job creation over the year cut unemployment down to 6.2 % in 2019, from 6.6 % in 2018. There have been efforts to encourage an EU-level response to unemployment for some time, and the establishment of a European unemployment reinsurance scheme (EURS) was already advancing when Covid-19 hit.

Economic and technical changes (mainly relating to digitalisation, automation and artificial intelligence) were redrawing the map of the world of work: new jobs were appearing while others were becoming obsolete. The growing use of industrial robots was resulting in job automation in many workplaces. Only jobs that involved active observation, perception and manipulation, especially when such tasks were performed in unstructured environments (also called 'engineering bottlenecks'), were less threatened by automation. Digital skills on a generic (or higher) level were becoming a prerequisite for entry into many jobs. The largest skills deficit related to the use of software for content manipulation. Despite relatively high unemployment rates, there was a lack of digitally skilled people to fill job vacancies. The forecast for 2020 was a deficit of more than 500 000 information and communication technology (ICT) professionals in Europe.

Another tendency present on the labour market was that recent economic, technical and societal developments were progressively reshaping the ways in which work was performed. Atypical work patterns were progressively replacing the traditional pattern of full-time work and open-ended contracts. Eurostat figures show that the proportion of temporary employment and part-time employment has increased steadily over recent decades, respectively affecting 14.8 % and 18.3 % of the EU-27 working-age population in the fourth quarter of 2019. The number of freelancers was increasing at a pace comparable to that of the growth of the platform economy, in which tasks are

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offered, assigned and performed through an online platform, often functioning across borders and time zones, which also allows for real-time, interactive and often mutual rating of the performance of service providers and reliability of users.

Social security was already lagging behind, as today's social protection systems were set up at a time when full-time and long-term employment contracts were the norm. These forms of employment no longer apply to the working patterns of the majority of people.

The achievement of a better work-life balance and a better and more equal distribution of caring tasks between men and women were hot topics. Teleworking was not commonly used to achieve all these goals: according to Joint Research Centre (JRC) data, it was only used by 5.4 % of workers in 2019. The dominance of telework varied strongly across sectors and occupations. It was particularly high in knowledge- and ICT-intensive services (around 40 %).

Finally, another long-term trend, already apparent for decades, was the steady ageing of the EU's working population. Life expectancy was continuing to rise, while fertility rates were falling. It was estimated in 2019 that one in four in Europe would be over 65 by 2030. The working population of the EU shrank for the first time in 2010, and was expected to decline every year until 2060. In parallel, the old-age dependency ratio (those 65 and over, compared with those aged 15-64) was set to continue increasing. Economic and demographic changes were already impacting on the funding of healthcare, social services and pensions, and posing challenges for the financial sustainability of social protection provisions.

Consequences of the pandemic

The coronavirus outbreak and the ensuing health and economic crisis have generated many unprecedented challenges for people, households and businesses. Lockdown measures, disrupted supply chains, global recessions, limited social interactions, and closures of schools and childcare facilities have also had a major impact on the world of work. Temporary and permanent job losses, limited or increased working time, loss of income and significantly modified working conditions have challenged workers in many sectors of the economy, in different ways and to varying extents.

Automation and the coronavirus recession combined have created a 'double-disruption' scenario for workers in certain sectors. An October 2020 World Economic Forum study stressed that the pandemic has accelerated and exacerbated tendencies, problems and risks that were already present in the world of work, such as automation, and that this is already leading to the loss of livelihoods for millions of people, as well as structural changes to the economy.

Crisis-related economic and social measures mean that differences between the social protection of workers have increased still further. Those in traditional forms of employment (full-time workers with open-ended contracts) with already sufficient social protection have been better able to cope with the consequences of the pandemic, while workers in non-standard work forms (such as platform workers, part-time workers and workers with fixed-term contracts) have suffered more.

Technological sectors of the EU have been slowed down by the coronavirus crisis, which has led to increased unemployment. In the euro area, the unemployment rate rose to 7.8 % in July 2020 (from 6.5 % in February). Women and young people under 24 years in particular were affected by this rise. After the economic crisis and the pandemic, these young people are at risk of becoming the next lost generation. The coronavirus crisis has also led to an increased use of short-term work schemes, encouraged by the establishment of a temporary instrument named support to mitigate unemployment risks in an emergency (SURE), set up to address the consequences of the crisis and protect jobs in the Member States.

The impact of the coronavirus pandemic and the accompanying economic lockdown has been worse for the employment of women than for the employment of men. Eurofound mentions that, with the exception of healthcare, where 85 % of frontline workers are women, men are more likely to work in sectors considered to be essential economic activities, such as transport, protection

services (e.g. policing), farming, and maintenance and repair; this has meant that during lockdown periods they are better protected from unemployment. Furthermore, the pandemic has hit many services that involve frequent contact with customers and clients, and for which telework is not possible, such as retail, leisure and personal services (e.g. hairdressers and beauticians), hospitality, travel and tourism (e.g. tour guides and flight attendants). According to analysis, over four in ten (41 %) of employees in the EU belong to this category. This 'interactive service work' is female dominated, with 61 % female workers. In addition, women tend to work under more precarious work arrangements, and may not be covered by the full range of employment-related entitlements. Increased childcare needs during the pandemic have also impacted women's ability to work. According to recent Eurofound findings, slightly more women than men (9 % versus 8 %) became unemployed during the first few months of the coronavirus crisis. According to this survey, young women aged 18 to 34 were most likely to lose their job (11 % – compared with 9 % of young men).

The platform economy – the use of digital networks to coordinate economic transactions – has also been affected. Platform providers had to face changes in demand and applied various strategies in response. This, in turn, had an impact on workers' employment and working conditions. Problems concerning the social security of platform workers became more obvious, as a result of forced work stoppages due to self-isolation, or a lack of sick pay in many cases. Different types of platform have been affected in different ways: while some (connected with the delivery of food and goods, but also software development and translation) have experienced higher demand and even expanded their services, others (household services and personal transport) have had to downscale to cope with the drop in revenue arising from decreased demand. A March 2020 Eurofound paper pointed out that platform workers in the transport sector (ride hailing and food delivery) have been the worst affected, while professional services performed online (such as remote consultations with health professionals) have been less affected and were even able to help reduce the pressure on health systems.

The public health crisis induced by the pandemic led governments initially to shut down all workplaces, apart from those providing essential goods and services, in order to bring the spread of the virus under control. Teleworking from home turned out to be a viable option for some, despite having its own challenges (for instance the need for technical equipment and technical support, or time management and work-life balance problems). Teleworking has been an unprecedented social experiment: according to one survey 37 % of the EU population was teleworking in April 2020 (in certain Member States, such as Finland, the figure was as high as 60 %). Telework has ensured continuity for many sectors, and has saved many people's jobs. It has enabled working parents to continue to work despite having to care for their children full-time in the context of extended school closures. However, the line between work and home has become blurred, as separating work and family time has become problematic for about 27 % of workers.

Despite the availability of basic broadband for all since 2015, during the pandemic the two digital divides (between urban and rural areas, and in terms of higher or lower e-skills) have become wider. Disadvantaged groups suffered most, not being able to profit sufficiently from the internet.

Future trends and challenges

Accelerated automation

According to the OECD Employment Outlook 2019, automation, technology-assisted division of labour and algorithmic workforce management (for instance through online platforms), have been accelerated by the necessities of the coronavirus pandemic and have fundamentally changed production processes and the shape of the world of work, and will continue to do so. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) points out that even if the digital transformation creates many new opportunities, it will also make a growing number of current workers' tasks redundant and will require substantial restructuring. There is evidence to suggest that these trends are already making job losses and employment changes more frequent for many

workers, increasing their need for income and re-employment support. The pressure to automate and digitalise is expected to increase as a result of the current shock, even in sectors that recover. This will worsen technology-based job disruptions for workers who are insufficiently prepared, and will have a particular impact on at-risk workers with no access to reskilling, upskilling or redeployment support, adding to a growing digital divide. In sectors that do not fully recover, the risk of long-term unemployment and poverty is high, especially in the absence of retraining, income support or other active labour market policies.

According to Cedefop's skills forecast, in the sectors that have experienced a medium-high and high impact of coronavirus on economic activity, around one fifth to one quarter of the new jobs expected to be created up to 2030 are at risk of automation. This amounts to approximately 1.4 million jobs at stake in the EU-27. Those workers most affected are in manufacturing sectors, such as metal and machinery plant operators, trades workers, and food preparation assistants.

Figure 1 – The impact of the pandemic on sectors and the future of occupations

cedefop	FUTURE JOB OPENINGS	CHANGING OCCUPATIONAL IMPORTANCE	RISK OF AUTOMATION
MANUFACTURING			
Metal, machinery and related trades workers	Low	Strong negative	Very high
Stationary plant and machine operators	Low	Negative	Very high
Science and engineering associate professionals	Medium	Neutral	Average
WHOLESALE & RETAIL TRADE, REPAIR OF MOTOR VEHICLES & MOTORCYCLES			
Sales workers	Medium/Low	Neutral/Negative	Average
Metal, machinery and related trades workers	Low	Strong negative	Very high
Business and administration associate professionals	Medium/High	Strong positive	Low
ACCOMODATION & FOOD SERVICE ACTIVITIES			
Personal service workers	Medium	Negative	Very low
Food preparation assistants	Medium	Negative	High
Hospitality and retail managers	Medium/High	Neutral/Negative	Very low
REAL ESTATE, PROFESSIONAL, SCIENTIFIC & TECHNICAL ACTIVITIES			
Business and administration associate professionals	Medium/High	Positive	Low
Business and administration professionals	Medium/High	Strong positive	Average
Science and engineering professionals	High	Neutral	Average
TRANSPORTATION & STORAGE			
Drivers and mobile plant operators	Medium	Negative	High
Numerical and material recording clerks	Low	Strong negative	Low
Clerical support workers	Low	Strong negative	Low
INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION			
ICT professionals	Medium	Positive	Low
ICT technicians	Low	Neutral	Low
Legal, social and cultural professionals	High	Positive	Below average

high coronavirus impact | medium-high coronavirus impact

Source: CEDEFOP Skills forecast.

According to a report by the World Economic Forum (WEF), the pace of technology adoption may accelerate in some areas, such as cloud computing, big data and e-commerce, following a trend already established in previous years. There has also been a significant rise in interest in encryption, non-humanoid robots and artificial intelligence. In addition to lockdowns and economic contraction sparked by the pandemic, technological adoption by companies will transform tasks, jobs and skills by 2025. The WEF report states that 43 % of businesses indicated that they planned to reduce their workforce due to technology integration, 41 % planned to expand their use of contractors for task-specialised work, and 34 % planned to expand their workforce due to technology integration.

According to the WEF, by 2025, the time spent on working tasks by humans and machines will be equal. A number of companies also expect to make changes to their location, their value chains, and the size of their workforce owing to factors

other than technology in the next five years. Compared with previous years, in 2020, creation of new jobs slowed down while job destruction accelerated. Based on WEF figures, it is estimated that by 2025, 85 million jobs worldwide may be displaced by a shift in the division of labour between humans and machines, while 97 million new jobs may emerge that are better suited to the new division of labour between humans, machines and algorithms.

Skills gaps

Rapid digitalisation of working processes during the pandemic has made already existing digital skills gaps even more apparent. There is an urgent need for digital upskilling of workers, especially in older age groups. Workers lacking necessary digital skills can also lose their competitiveness against machines and artificial intelligence.

Following rapid technological developments resulting from the coronavirus crisis (digital transformation of a number of workplaces; training courses, meetings and conferences held online) the window of opportunity to reskill and upskill workers has become shorter than before. This applies to workers who are likely to keep their roles, but also to those who risk losing their jobs on account of rising recession-related unemployment.[1]

According to the WEF, in addition to basic and advanced digital skills, required among others by teleworking, other skills will be also high in demand on the labour market in the next five years. The top skills and skill groups that employers see as rising in prominence include critical thinking and analysis as well as problem-solving, and skills in self-management such as active learning, resilience, stress tolerance and flexibility. At global level, companies estimate that around 40 % of workers will require reskilling of six months or less, and 94 % of business leaders expect employees to learn new skills on the job (a sharp increase from 65 % in 2018). Demand for skills related to a more sustainable and green economy can also be expected.

Teleworking as the 'new normal'

As already mentioned, teleworking has undergone unprecedented expansion during the coronavirus pandemic, and the chances are that a large number of work processes will continue to be carried out remotely. According to Eurofound findings, approximately 40 % of paid hours worked by employees were performed from home during the first few months of the coronavirus crisis. The WEF report states that globally 84 % of employers are set to move quickly to digitalise working processes, including significant expansion of remote work, potentially moving 44 % of their workforce to operate remotely.

This new way of working, however, can have undesirable effects on workers in terms both of workload and stress levels. A briefing requested by the European Parliament's Committee on Employment and Social Affairs points out a number of potential risks. New, intrusive technologies enable workers to work away from conventional office set-ups and to have potential connectivity anytime and anywhere. This hyperconnectivity can lead to a particular type of stress, referred to as 'technostress'. Other possible psycho-social effects of this physical and emotional challenge include addiction, fatigue, sleep deprivation, anxiety, isolation or even burnout. Anytime and anywhere connectivity can be intrusive and unhelpful, potentially blurring the boundaries between work and personal life and can also raise privacy concerns and lead to work-life balance conflicts. Eurofound observes that 22 % of respondents of the Living, working and Covid-19 survey, working exclusively from home, reported difficulty concentrating on work because of family obligations, compared to only 8 % of those working in other locations. These findings give renewed importance to 'right to disconnect' initiatives.

Another problem related to remote work is the tracking of employees (of their presence and their performance) during working hours through digital software and applications. This kind of monitoring can raise the question of how to strike the right balance between legitimate business interests and the digital privacy of employees.

Platform work

Remote work can be carried out by employees of a particular company or officials of public administrations (teleworking), but it can be also done through online platforms, allowing a large income to be generated at almost zero cost. In parallel to the growing proportion of remote work, the importance of web-based platform work is also increasing.

The situation of platform workers is far from being sufficiently regulated. The employment status of platform workers is one of the hottest topics in public and policy debates on the platform economy in Europe, and appears to be the most important challenge to address.

Not only do platform workers have an unclear employment status, they also struggle with social security problems, for instance related to payed parental and sick leave or eligibility for income support measures. The lack of adequate training opportunities, unclear coverage by labour law, the absence of dispute resolution mechanisms and discrimination are also challenges they have to face.

Rethinking social protection

As already mentioned, workers in traditional forms of work (employees with open-ended and full-time work contracts) coped better with the new challenges in the world of work because of their better social protection system. Some social protection systems do not seem, however, to be geared up for the faster pace of job reallocation (the destruction and creation of jobs in different firms and industries) which will probably accompany the adoption of new production technologies.

While temporary and part-time workers are in principle covered in the same way as permanent full-time employees in most Member States, as long as they satisfy minimum employment periods, workers in less secure forms of employment (such as casual employment, seasonal work or hybrid categories) face greater difficulties in accessing social protection. Independent workers and workers in short-term or part-time employment are 40 to 50 % less likely to receive income support when they are out of work than standard employees. Pension coverage also tends to be more limited, creating a greater risk of low income and poverty in old age.

Self-employed workers face a number of additional challenges in comparison with employees, including the double contribution issue (they have to pay the equivalent of both employer and employee contributions), fluctuating earnings, and moral hazard (they typically need to meet relatively stringent requirements to demonstrate that their business is no longer operational in order to claim unemployment benefits, for instance). Furthermore, when self-employed workers do have access to social protection, it is frequently on a voluntary basis.

Demographic changes

If current demographic trends continue, Europe's workforce will be 2 % smaller in 2030 than it is today – while employment rates will increase slightly. The changing age structure of the population in the EU will put pension systems under pressure. According to forecasts, even if the labour market participation of people of working age is on the rise, by 2050, there will be just two people of working age for every person aged 65 or over. For pension systems relying on existing workers to pay for current pensioners, this presents a serious challenge to the adequacy, sustainability and inter-generational fairness of pension systems. Growing lifespans also mean that for a fixed retirement age, retirement periods will be longer and hence the total costs of pensions paid out will be higher over these longer periods. Ageing demographics put pressure on the affordability of pension systems (with fewer people of working age supporting more people drawing a pension). Therefore, Member States should take further action to reform their public pension systems to put them on a more sustainable footing for the future. Means to achieve this goal could include, for instance, increasing the statutory retirement age to reflect changes in life expectancy; equalising the pension age for men and women; limiting early retirement and integrating special pension schemes into the mainstream; increasing the employability and participation of older workers,

including through life-long learning and active ageing; promoting active labour markets including for older groups; and encouraging private saving.

Possibilities for EU action

Automation and artificial intelligence

The downturn in factory production during the pandemic has raised the question of the further automation of jobs (mainly those involving routine tasks, such as assembly-line work, but also book-keeping or accounting). According to estimations, by 2025, working tasks will be carried out by humans and machines in equal proportions. If this path is pursued with due respect for ethical guidelines and the interests of both employees and employers, it could be beneficial to the economy. EU digital policy should be shaped in a way that represents our societal values, endorses inclusiveness, and remains compatible with our way of life.

This means also that adequate job protection measures are needed for workers whose jobs are at risk of automation. If the automation of certain tasks is unavoidable, upskilling, reskilling and redeployment of the workforce concerned must be ensured, as new types of professional and personal skills are required to respond to technological progress. The EU will have to find solutions to provide workers (especially older workers with often insufficient digital skills and young people at the beginning of their professional careers) with these new types of skills. In its resolution of February 2019 on a comprehensive European industrial policy on artificial intelligence and robotics, the European Parliament stressed that education curricula must be adapted to automation, including through the establishment of new learning paths and the use of new delivery technologies.

Another phenomenon experienced during the pandemic confinement periods has been the switch to digital (tasks previously performed in person were carried out online, from workers' homes). This experience has demonstrated that digital technologies can make people's physical presence unnecessary in certain cases (for meetings, conferences or school lessons, for instance), but also that (once again) a new agility and adequate digital skills are essential.

Upskilling, reskilling and skills recognition

In order offset the effects of unfavourable demographic developments, it is important to create a larger and more inclusive labour market, by means for instance of measures designed to reconcile work and family life, opening up the labour market to people with disabilities, low educational levels, or coming from outside the EU, as well as making further progress in bringing older workers into employment. Upskilling and reskilling of older workers, in particular concerning digital skills will therefore have to be insured.

Upskilling is also necessary in order to reduce the mismatch between the skills available and those demanded for a digital transformation of the economy. This has been a key EU-level priority for the past decade and should continue to remain one, for instance through the new European skills agenda. Among the 12 flagship initiatives of this agenda, several concern the adult workforce: 'Individual learning accounts' should help 'close existing gaps in the access to training for working age adults and empower them to successfully manage labour market transitions'. The Commission is due to launch this initiative in the last quarter of 2021.

Another flagship initiative envisaged by this agenda is the non-legislative initiative on a 'European approach for micro-credentials'. Its publication is also scheduled for the last quarter of 2021. Its goal will be to empower workers 'to up- and reskill throughout their entire lives … making sure that all learning experiences are properly valued'.

According to the above-mentioned WEF study, developments on the labour market must go hand in hand with climate-preserving measures. There is also a need to take proactive measures to ease

the transition of workers into more sustainable job opportunities. Green jobs and greener jobs are needed and so is the reskilling of workers in order to be able to carry out these new tasks.

Regulating teleworking

Connectivity at any time and anywhere, often accompanied by a high workload, can lead to increased stress levels for workers. Regulation at EU level would be useful in order to preserve the mental health of workers, by securing them the right to disconnect at specific times of the day. The European Parliament voted in January 2021 on a legislative-initiative resolution, calling on the Commission to put forward a legislative proposal to secure workers the right to disconnect.

If work is carried out remotely from workers' homes, the dividing lines between work and private life can become blurred, also in the sense that, theoretically, employees can be encouraged (or volunteer) to work even when they are on sick leave or annual leave, as well as during weekends or public holidays. Therefore, regulation relating to transparent and predictable working conditions for teleworkers may be necessary.

There are also ethical concerns surrounding the need to track employees working remotely during working hours so as to preserve the employer's economic interests. At EU level, employees' privacy is already protected by the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), which requires employees' consent for the use of tracking software or applications. However, as a Eurofound study points out, more has to be done at the level of national regulatory frameworks.

Another approach could be to rethink the basis on which salaries are calculated, moving away from working hours, for instance, to indicators of results achieved or work done.

Greater clarity around platform work

In A Union that strives for more: My agenda for Europe, Ursula von der Leyen, then candidate to be President of the European Commission, referred to her objective to 'look at ways of improving labour conditions of platform workers'. This idea was taken up in the Commission's 2021 work programme. In her letter of intent, the Commission President outlined that a new initiative on improving the working conditions of platform workers would be one of the key initiatives of 2021.

In the context of platform work, the most important questions are the clarification of the employment status of platform workers (whether they should be considered as employees or self-employed, whether the platform itself should be seen as an employer). It is equally important to adjust existing labour market institutions and welfare systems to the specific needs of platform workers. Tailor-made solutions (for instance personal accounts) could help to consolidate their situation on the labour market.

As with digital platforms (on-location services excluded) work can be provided from any location, it is also necessary to frame regulation to prevent social dumping (for instance where platforms hire their workers in Member States where salaries are lower in order to satisfy clients in Member States with higher living standards). Digitalisation also enables platforms to employ workers in non-EU countries where wages are considerably lower than the EU average. This can lead to unfair competition between platforms and should be prevented by legislative means.

Adequate social protection

The Council recommendation on access to social protection for workers and the self-employed, and the Directive on transparent and predictable working conditions, are already first steps in the direction of the inclusion of new groups of workers within European social security systems. However, social security measures need to be extended to other workers in non-standard work forms (such as platform workers, the self-employed, part-time workers, and workers with fixed-term contracts). The part-time unemployed (jobseekers with intermittent or part-time employment) also need to be included. This could be achieved through separate directives or guidelines for the

individual groups concerned (for instance regulating the social benefits of platform workers).The coordination of Member States' social security systems must also be pursued.

During the pandemic, the European Commission created the support to mitigate unemployment risks in an emergency (SURE) instrument in order to finance short-time work schemes by up to €100 billion in loans. In the long run, SURE will need to be replaced by a European unemployment reinsurance scheme (EURS), which it is hoped will be finalised in the near future.

According to the WEF study, supporting workers will require global, regional and national public-private collaboration on an unprecedented scale and at an unprecedented speed, namely on economic growth, revival and transformation; work, wages and job creation; education, skills and learning; and diversity, equity and inclusion. The future directive on fair minimum wages will be an important step into this direction. This directive is expected to ensure that minimum wages are set at an adequate level, and that every worker can earn a decent living in the EU.

The Work-Life Balance Directive, which entered into force in August 2019, introduced a set of legislative measures to foster a better work-life balance for parents and carers, and more equal sharing of parental leave between men and women, and address women's under-representation on the labour market. This path must be pursued further. Given the disproportionate impact of the crisis on women, it is necessary to find ways to improve women's employment conditions and families' financial stability, as well as to extend further the right to flexible working arrangements for carers and working parents.

Adapting to demographic changes

The green paper on ageing, expected to be published by the Commission in early 2021, will launch a broad policy debate on long-term impacts, notably on care and pensions, and on how to foster active ageing. This will also involve an assessment of whether social protection systems are fit to deal with the needs of an ageing population and in which ways they could be improved.

The healthcare and pension systems of the EU Member States will need thorough revision and reinforcement in order to cope with the situation of an ageing population, and their coordination will need to be further developed. As also stated in the 2020 Commission report on the impact of demographic change of the European Commission, most Member States have already undertaken substantial reforms of their pension systems and this must be pursued in a coordinated way. The pan-European pension product (PEPP) is already an important step in this direction.

Possible initiatives

The following is a check-list of initiatives which could be taken, or are being taken, at European level to address some of the issues analysed in this paper.

	Initiative	Likely lead actor	What could be done?	
1	Legislation on artificial intelligence in production processes	Commission Council European Parliament	Ethical guidelines on the use of artificial intelligence in production processes to protect the interests of both employees and employers	
2	Regulation for the protection of workers against automation	Commission Council European Parliament	Adequate job protection measures for workers whose jobs are at risk of automation	
3	Digital Europe programme 2021-2027	Commission, Member States	Building the strategic digital capacities of the EU and facilitating the wide deployment of digital technologies, and boosting investment in supercomputing, artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, advanced digital skills	
4	General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)	Commission Council European Parliament	Regulating the protection of data concerning employees' private lives, not least in the context of teleworking	
5	Applying and coordinating the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) at Member-State level	Commission Council European Parliament	The General Data Protection Regulation recognises the importance of digital privacy, however it has to be transposed into national regulatory frameworks and this transposition should be coordinated.	
6	Updated skills agenda	Commission	Ensuring that the right to training and lifelong learning, enshrined in the European Pillar of Social Rights, becomes a reality all across Europe, from cities to remote and rural areas	
7	Initiatives on lifelong learning/reskilling of older workers	Commission	Initiatives to provide the ageing workforce active in the labour market with the skills necessary in today's world of work (mainly digital skills).	
8	European approach to micro-credentials	Commission	Empowering workers to up- and reskill throughout their entire lives, with all learning experiences properly valued.	
9	Individual learning accounts	Commission	Helping close existing gaps in access to training for working age adults and empower them to successfully manage labour market transitions.	
10	Initiative on green jobs	Commission	Taking proactive measures to ease the transition of workers into more sustainable job opportunities and the creation of green or greened jobs.	
11	Guidelines on mental health protection related to teleworking	Council	Developing guidelines to prevent and to tackle stress caused by blurred lines between teleworking and private life.	
12	Regulation on social protection related to teleworking	Commission Council European Parliament	Redefining health insurance during working hours and sick leave. Redefining rules related to annual leave for teleworkers.	

13	Regulation on health and safety in the workplace for teleworkers	Commission Council European Parliament	Regulating health issues concerning teleworkers (such as on accidents during working hours, or rest periods).	
14	Regulation on the working conditions of platform workers	Commission Council European Parliament	Clarifying the status of platform workers. Enshrining working conditions and social rights of platform workers in labour regulation, and adapting existing regulation to the specific needs of platform workers.	
15	Regulation against social dumping in the context of platform work	Commission Council European Parliament	Regulating to prevent unfair competition related to platform work due to considerable differences between salaries in the Member States of the EU.	
16	Regulation on outsourcing into third countries in the context of platform work	Commission Council European Parliament	Regulating to prevent unfair competition related to platform work due to possible differences between salaries in the Member States of the EU and certain third countries.	
17	Regulation on coordination of social security systems of Member States	Commission Council European Parliament	Pursuing coordination of social security systems by adopting a new regulation, already proposed by the Commission.	
18	European unemployment reinsurance scheme (EURS)	Commission, Council, European Parliament	The scheme would be funded by regular contributions from national schemes and would support them in cases where unemployment reached a certain level.	
19	Support to mitigate unemployment risks in an emergency (SURE) instrument	Commission	Instrument designed to finance short-term work schemes at Member-State level. In the long run it will be replaced by the European unemployment reinsurance scheme (EURS)	
20	Further developing social security regulation for non-standard work forms	Commission Council European Parliament	Extending existing social security regulation from standard work forms to atypical forms of work	
21	Social security for the self-employed	Commission Council European Parliament	Extending existing social security regulation to the self-employed, by applying it to their specific needs.	
22	Directive on minimum wages	Commission Council European Parliament	The directive will not oblige Member States to set minimum wages by law and does not set the level of the minimum wage, but seeks to ensure that minimum wages are set in every Member State at an adequate level.	
23	Green Paper on ageing	Commission	The paper will set out the key issues related to ageing, and discuss possible ways to anticipate and respond to the socioeconomic impact of an ageing Europe.	
24	Guidelines on further revision of pension systems	Council	Adapting pension systems to an ageing population, by revising the statutory retirement age, equalising the pension age for men and women, limiting early retirement and integrating special pension schemes into the mainstream.	

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ENDNOTE

[1] According to the World Economic Forum, there is a difference in online training habits between those in employment and those who are unemployed: those in employment place greater emphasis on personal development courses, which have seen 88 % growth among that population, while the unemployed place greater emphasis on learning digital skills such as data analysis, computer science and information technology.

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