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WORLD EMPLOYMENT SOCIAL OUTLOOK

The changing
nature of jobs

2015

WORLD EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL OUTLOOK

The changing nature of jobs

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PREFACE

In January 2015, the last edition of the *World Employment and Social Outlook* highlighted the lacklustre job creation that continues to plague the world economy and drew attention to the need to address the global jobs gap by bolstering aggregate demand and enterprise investment.

This current volume, *The changing nature of jobs*, brings to the fore a number of trends that underlie the transformations that the labour market is experiencing.

This report, based on an analysis of employment patterns in over 180 countries at all levels of development, finds that employment patterns have changed considerably over the past decade. Full-time, stable employment contracts represent less than one in four jobs and that statistic is not improving noticeably. Moreover, a continuation of past trends would suggest that the incidence of stable employment relationships will represent an even smaller fraction of the total number of jobs in coming years.

Changing patterns of work are likely to influence trends in both aggregate demand and the overall relationship between economic growth, on the one hand, and employment and productivity, on the other. The changing nature of jobs heightens the risk of perpetuating the vicious circle of weak global demand and slow job creation that has characterized the global economy and many labour markets throughout the post-crisis period. Already, the ILO estimates that the global jobs gap is resulting in a shortfall of wages equal to around 1.2 per cent of global output. However, with increasing diversification in forms of work and workplace organization, expansion in employment alone, without due consideration being given to the quality of jobs or workers' income security, risks failing to provide robust and sustainable support to aggregate demand.

These considerations raise a wide range of issues from the point of view of policy-making and the ILO itself. First, it is crucial to establish the extent to which the diversified work patterns that are emerging are the product of external factors, such as the rise of new technology and the process of production fragmentation and evolution of value chains that accompany it. The evidence in this report seems to suggest that the spread of global value chains is associated with the diversification of forms of work, as well as higher productivity (though this does not necessarily translate into increased earnings for the workers employed in those value chains). On the other hand, employment patterns vary significantly across countries, suggesting that governments, enterprises and workers have some leverage over the types of jobs that are created.

Second, the impact of different types of employment on individual well-being and social cohesion also needs to be assessed. The report shows that average incomes for workers in non-standard forms of work tend to be lower than is the case with stable jobs. Furthermore, the rise in informal employment, undeclared and temporary work arrangements, as well as involuntary part-time work, has contributed to the widening of income inequalities, which have been recorded in the majority of countries over the past two decades.

The existence of more diversified work arrangements also raises questions for social dialogue and social cohesion. Workers have different types of employment and enterprises are positioned differently along the value chain. In such a heterogeneous context, the organization of both workers and employers becomes increasingly challenging.

Third, what can policies do? The issue is how to provide adequate labour and social protection for different types of employment, while at the same time nurturing economic growth. As global employment and social conditions shift and evolve in the context of changing economic conditions, there is a need for policies to respond to anticipated changes. In this respect, the report documents considerable policy innovation in a wide range of developed and developing economies.

Their experiences illustrate that the quest to achieve both higher productivity and technological innovation coupled with decent work opportunities for women and men is attainable.

Further changes are needed in social protection in the face of such changing conditions. This includes measures to enable the self-employed and those in other forms of employment to participate in social security schemes. Extension of non-contributory mechanisms provides one possible means to increase coverage, particularly for those outside standard employment, notably the self-employed.

The report also highlights cases where labour regulation is adapting to changing forms of work, and reveals that employment protection legislation has modestly increased in many countries and regions. In the cases where the level of protection has fallen in recent years, it has not led to improved employment outcomes. In general, the report indicates the importance of matching regulation to specific economic and labour market conditions.

As we approach the 104th Session of the International Labour Conference, I hope therefore that the findings in this report will help to provide support to ILO constituents in their respective endeavours to achieve better economic and social outcomes, based on sustainable enterprises and decent work for all.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Guy Ryder". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Guy Ryder
ILO Director-General

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Who are the authors of *World Employment and Social Outlook 2015: The changing nature of jobs*

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The chapter authors are:

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- Steven Kapsos, Raymond Torres, Florence Bonnet and Richard Horne (Chapter 1);
- Uma Rani, Marianne Furrer and Tom Lavers (Chapter 2);
- Florence Bonnet (Chapter 3);
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