



42nd Ipse Meeting

The Hague, May 30 and 31, 2016

Hosted by Europe House in The Hague

The changing face of labor in the age of digital technologies: solidarity-based social protection reacts

Some 20 years have passed since Ipse first focused on changing labor paradigms during the European conferences known as Ipse Meetings.

Reshaping of professions and the skills they require, frequent career shifts, flexicurity, safeguarding of career paths: these and other transformations, against a backdrop of economic, social and cultural crises, are profoundly destabilizing the foundations of European social protection. Throughout the EU, these rights are all determined to some extent by professional activities.

We have continuously put forth avenues for reflection and action, looking to spur the development of social systems rooted in solidarity as an essential condition for economic efficiency and democracy, looking to ensure that transformations in the workplace and those in the social protection sector work together.

Nonetheless, as the only mechanism that grants rights to all citizens, social security alone surpasses this link between professional activities and access to social coverage.

And yet, although much remains to be done, we must acknowledge that social protection providers working in the social and paritarian economy stand out within organized civil society as innovation drivers.

In this age of multifarious upheavals - geopolitical, environmental and societal, not to mention financial or other crises - we witness an acceleration of history in the form of the phenomenon generally known as the digital revolution.

The digitization of the economy forces us to re-examine, and even reinvent labor and the very status of workers.

Robotics and office automation have long reshaped the relationship between producers of wealth and the object produced. The end purpose of work becomes less perceptible in a post-industrial society where services are ever more dematerialized.

The erosion of waged-based society has affected social structures as a whole, fracturing the social state, formerly known as the welfare state. The re-emerging debates on job flexibility and occupational social security have focused on open-ended and fixed-term employment contracts, but remains, as always, structured in terms of salaried workers.



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Digital technologies have changed the rules of this once immutable game. The name Uber has come to epitomize this phenomenon of profiteers who capitalize on periods of turmoil, when people and structures find themselves submerged under technological tsunamis. "Uberization" transforms work into a series of erratic tasks, imposed according to isolated requests addressed to pseudo-independent workers, themselves dependent on digital platforms and applications. In this context, are not freedom and entrepreneurship mere illusions?

While the central factor of well-being for wage-earners lies in a contract that sets out mutual long-term obligations, this one-off transaction intensifies insecurity. Companies themselves cease to inspire a sense of belonging, abdicating their tradition of bringing together employers and employees, albeit in an asymmetrical relationship. They become mere databases, more valuable than tangible assets.

How can our social protection and social security systems, our mutual and paritarian organizations survive, adjust to and even anticipate such upheavals in the workplace?

Moreover, the GAFSA companies (Google, Apple, Facebook, Amazon) are entering the health insurance market, wielding the personal data that we unwittingly provide. This new factor is not to be confused with e-health, which is supposed to focus on enhancing medical performance.

How can solidarity-based social protection implement preventive and more predictive policies without dependable personal health data?


How can it impart stability to its commitments and continue to comply with prudential standards if **contributors**, who even today are essentially salaried employees and genuine independent workers, **are no longer clearly identifiable as participating in the funding of social protection systems?**

Session 1 : Digitalisation and Big data: evolution or implosion of our social models

Session 2 : Labour in turmoil

Session 3 : New rights for social protection

Session 4 : Paritarian and mutualist institutions, social economy: wich solutions to the challenges of the digital revolution

These are the main challenges to be discussed at the 42nd Ipse Meeting, with a prime focus on the changing face of labor, the bedrock of social protection in the European Union. 

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