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Social Dialogue and the Future of Work

Background report for the ILO-AICESIS
Conference

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Acronyms

AICESIS	Association of Economic and Social Councils and Similar Institutions
ALMPs	active labour market policies
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
CDES	Economic and Social Development Council (Brazil)
CESE	Economic, Social and Environmental Council
CES/ESC	Economic and Social Council
CNDS	National Committee/Council for Social Dialogue
CNEL	National Council for Economics and Labour (Italy)
CNT	National Labour Council (Belgium)
ESC-SIs	Economic and Social Councils and Similar Institutions
EU	European Union
FDI	foreign direct investment
FoW	Future of Work
GSCs	global supply chains
ICT	information and communications technologies
ILC	International Labour Conference
ILO	International Labour Organization/Office
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IOE	International Organisation of Employers
ITUC	International Trade Union Confederation
MCESD	Malta Council for Economic and Social Development
MNEs	multi-national enterprises
NEET	not in employment, education or training
NGO	non-governmental organization
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OKE	Social and Economic Council of Greece
RMG TCC	Ready-Made Garment - Tripartite Consultation Committee (Bangladesh)
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals

SER	Social and Economic Council (the Netherlands)
SMEs	Small and medium-sized enterprises
TAL	Tripartite Alliance Limited (Singapore)
UCESIF	Union of Francophone Economic and Social Councils and Similar Institutions
UGTT	Tunisian General Labour Union
UN	United Nations
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

Executive summary

This report is a background document for the conference on ‘Social Dialogue and the Future of Work’, being held on 23-24 November 2017 in Athens and organized jointly by the International Labour Office (ILO), the International Association of Economic and Social Councils and Similar Institutions (AICESIS) and the Social and Economic Council of Greece (OKE). The report is based, in large part, on the results of a survey of Economic and Social Councils and other Similar Institutions (ESC-SIs), to which 44 such institutions responded. It presents a snapshot of the current perceptions, priorities and capacity of ESC-SIs with respect to the various elements of the Future of Work (FoW) agenda and proposes some preliminary recommendations on how to strengthen their engagement.

The ILO-AICESIS conference takes place in the context of the Future of Work initiative, one of several initiatives launched by the ILO Director-General in 2015 to mark celebration of the centenary of the ILO in 2019. The initiative is encouraging reflection among the ILO’s tripartite constituents – governments, employers and workers – on the transformational changes underway in today’s world of work, and what they will mean for the economies and societies of tomorrow. Consideration of the role of social dialogue constitutes a central part of these reflections.

The ILO has identified four mega-drivers of change – technological advances, demographic shifts, climate change and accelerating globalization trends – that are fundamentally transforming the world of work. Social dialogue, involving governments and representative organizations of employers and of workers, should play a key role within the governance of work, so ensuring that countries devise balanced policies to address these forces of change, which deliver both sustainable economic growth and social justice.

The four mega-drivers of change each presents very different challenges to the ESC-SIs. The acceleration of globalization requires social dialogue to adapt to new decision-making structures, where multinational enterprises are increasingly powerful agents. Demographic shifts mean hard choices regarding the modernization of welfare state institutions and creating thousands of new and decent jobs for young workers. The potential of technological change can be harnessed only through the effective regulation of new forms of work and bridging skills gaps. Finally, managing climate change demands a broad consensus around a sustainable development strategy. The complexity of each challenge is compounded by the need to tackle them together and simultaneously, a daunting task for any country regardless of its income level and stage of development. The enormity of the task was reflected in the survey responses received from the ESC-SIs.

Many national social dialogue institutions were, in reality, still recovering from the effects of the global financial crisis. Almost two thirds acknowledged that social dialogue had been challenged in some way in recent years. More than half had undergone major reforms, including of their mandate (e.g. adding environmental issues), composition (increased representation of youth or women), structure (e.g. establishment of dedicated working groups or committees) or method of functioning.

There was widespread awareness that the changing world of work requires serious consideration. Two thirds of the ESC-SIs had developed a strategic plan to enhance the role of social dialogue and policy concertation (or planned to do so) while three quarters had an action plan dealing with one or more of the issues pertinent to the Future of Work agenda. The role of the ESC-SIs was mostly advisory (for example, in developing economic and social policies and drafting legislation) or sharing of information, including good practices, or both. Just over half of the institutions had an active negotiating role. The ESC-SIs assigned highest priority to their roles with respect to social dialogue, promoting collective bargaining and sound employment relations; social protection; working conditions; as well as unemployment and

underemployment. Lower priority was accorded to workplace compliance; corporate social responsibility; and to the changing nature of work.

Some differences emerged between countries of different income levels, as reflected in the policy priorities of their ESC-SIs. Countries with a long-established tradition of well-functioning social dialogue and well-resourced institutions, e.g. high-income countries in Continental Europe, had been able to devote greater attention to future of work-related challenges than had those lacking such a tradition and with lower human and financial resource availability. ESC-SIs in the latter group tended to prioritize current, pressing labour market problems (e.g. youth unemployment, occupational safety and health or workplace compliance) over the less familiar emerging challenges.

ESC-SIs were also at different stages of preparedness vis-à-vis the four mega-drivers of change. The newer phenomena, such as technological and climate change, which have been on policy agendas only since the early 2000s, were actively debated by far fewer ESC-SIs than the longer-standing issues of demographic shifts and accelerating globalization. For example, less than one third of the ESC-SIs had engaged in any specific activities (e.g. research, policy advice, advocacy or capacity building) regarding technological advances, and only one in three had actively engaged in discussions on this topic at the national, regional or global levels. Fewer still had engaged on the issue of climate change.

Several obstacles were identified as hampering the effective functioning of ESC-SIs. These constraints were both internal (primarily the lack of human, technical and financial resources and the weak convening power, reflecting a lack of engagement of governments) and external (decreasing trade union and employer organization density, as well as the decentralization of collective bargaining). Newer challenges, for example, the lack of representation of specific groups such as youth, migrant workers or workers in the gig economy, the emergence of new forms of work and of new civil society actors, were accorded lower priority by several ESC-SIs.

Many ESC-SIs were, however, aware of their weaknesses and were planning to strengthen their institutions through diverse measures, such as improving their strategic planning capacity, strengthening the technical knowledge and skills of their members, enhancing the convening power as well as better internal and external coordination and collaboration.

The ESC-SIs valued the institutional support provided by both AICESIS and the ILO. AICESIS members were generally satisfied with the services provided, and welcomed the exchange of information and good practices between countries, the organization of capacity building and training workshops, and the sharing of information and analysis on the future of work. The technical support of the ILO through Decent Work Country Programmes and specific projects was also appreciated.

Several provisional recommendations were made in the conclusions of the report. These included stronger strategic planning by the ESC-SIs concerning emerging and country-specific future of work issues - both the challenges and opportunities it presents; adoption of a more pro-active and 'pre-emptive' stance vis-à-vis the future of work; setting up of specific working groups on priority future of work issues; enhanced partnerships with expert institutions and academia; undertaking awareness campaigns, public hearings and other communications activities; and increased cross-country exchange of experience, policy approaches and good practice, which might be facilitated by AICESIS, in collaboration with the ILO.

I. Introduction

The Future of Work (FoW) initiative is one of seven key initiatives underway to mark celebration of the ILO's centenary in 2019 (ILO, 2015a). The far-reaching process of transformation of the world of work requires a prompt and effective response on behalf of all stakeholders, with the International Labour Organization (ILO) taking the lead. This task is all the more important given the ILO's commitment, in the Global Jobs Pact of 2009 (ILO, 2009), to make employment creation central to economic recovery, development and the elimination of inequalities, as well as in the context of achievement of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030 (UN, 2015).

The FoW initiative involves three phases. In the first phase (2016-17), tripartite national dialogues have taken place in some 110 ILO member States to date. In August 2017, the ILO's Director-General established a Global Commission on the Future of Work. During the second phase, the Commission will hold four meetings, resulting in the publication of a report, including recommendations, by the end of 2018. Finally, the report will be discussed at the Centenary session of the International Labour Conference (ILC) in June 2019.

In this context, the ILO is engaging in four so-called 'centenary conversations' on the following topics: (i) work and society, aimed at achieving an improved work-life balance in the face of major shifts away from standard employment relationships; (ii) decent work for all, to promote full employment and higher living standards; (iii) the organization of work and of production, which are changing rapidly due to globalization and technological advances; and (iv) the governance of work, redefining the roles of the ILO, national governments and the social partners at all levels of decision-making in the world of work.

The 2017 Joint Conference of the International Association of Economic and Social Councils and Similar Institutions (AICESIS) and the ILO contributes directly to the 'governance of work' conversation. It will consider how national social dialogue institutions, which bring together governments and representatives of employers and workers, understand and are managing the transformative change that is underway in today's world of work.

This background paper aims to provide participants with information and analysis to stimulate the discussion and debate on the theme of social dialogue and the future of work. It is structured as follows. The remainder of Section I examines, in turn, the main drivers of change in the world of work and the role of social dialogue in relation to each of them. It closes with a description of the pre-Conference survey, conducted jointly by the ILO and AICESIS, targeting AICESIS member institutions as well as some non-members. The following sections present key survey findings. Section II analyses the current situation of Economic and Social Councils and Similar Institutions (ESC-SIs) and their attitudes vis-à-vis the future of work challenges. Section III then details the main challenges and constraints facing ESC-SIs. Section IV discusses how ESC-SIs may strengthen their role in confronting the challenges posed by the future of work. Finally, Section V offers some conclusions and policy recommendations derived from the analysis.

1.1 Understanding the links between social dialogue and the drivers of change in the world of work

The ILO (2015a) has identified four mega-drivers of change that are shaping the future of work, namely: technological advances, demographic shifts, climate change and globalization. There is a close relationship between each mega-driver and the role of social dialogue (see Freyssinet, 2017).

First, accelerated technological change is having profound impacts on the demand for skills, the organization of work and the boundary between employment and self-employment. Social dialogue is needed to determine how best to harness the full potential of new technologies while, at the same time, the social partners need to adapt to the new configuration of work.

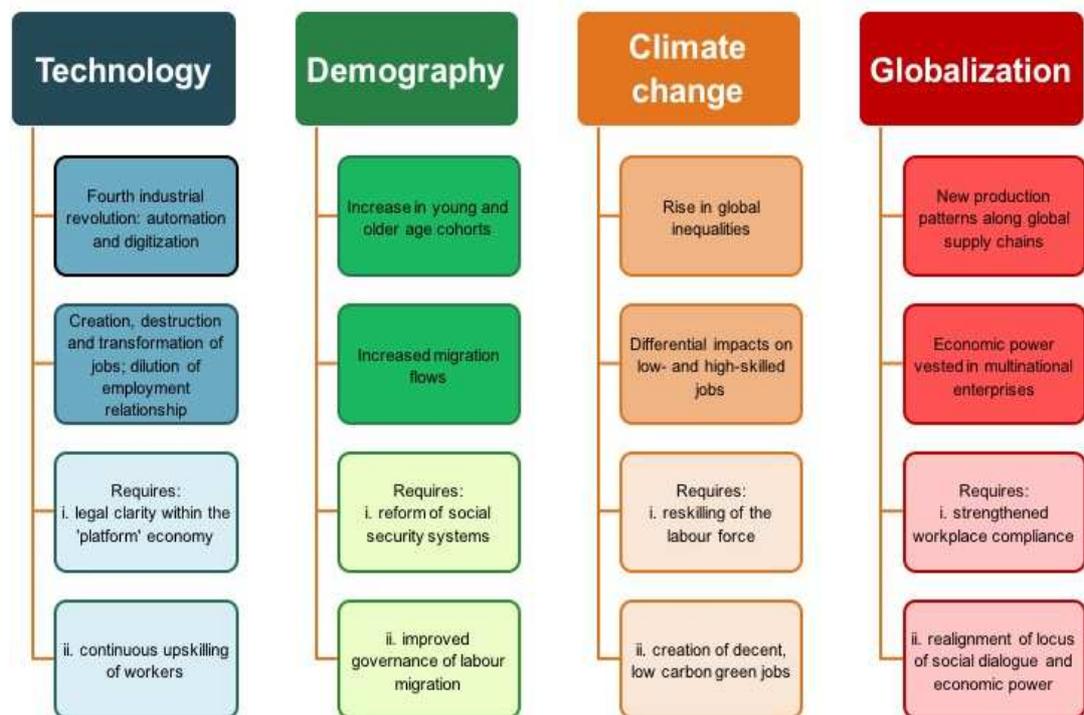
Second, demographic trends mean that social protection systems must prepare for a labour force whose composition will be radically different in the future. Social dialogue is vital for the effective modernization of existing welfare state institutions.

Third, social dialogue needs to be at the heart of debates on and responses to the global challenge of climate change, ensuring a just transition to mitigate its worst effects, including on global inequality.

Finally, the intensification of globalization particularly through global supply chains is progressively shifting the locus of economic decision-making away from the national level and towards multi-national enterprises (MNEs). Social dialogue processes need to adapt to this new reality, including through the promotion of fundamental principles and rights at work for all workers, including those in global supply chains.

We now examine each of the mega-drivers of change in turn, and consider the potential role of social dialogue in addressing them. Figure 1 provides an overview of some key issues and challenges linked to each mega-driver.

Figure 1. Implications for labour markets of the mega-drivers of change



1.1.1 Technological advances

Technological change is a dynamic process involving, simultaneously, the creation of new jobs, the destruction of obsolete ones, and the transformation of existing jobs, particularly in respect of how the work is organized. These processes are having wide-ranging impacts: for example, the blurring of boundaries between working and leisure time and between the workplace and home; the fragmentation of the production process; and the dispersal of the workplace. All these changes pose serious challenges for the institutions and processes of social dialogue; for example, the dispersal of the workplace makes it increasingly difficult for trade unions to reach their actual and potential new members.

Technological change today broadly comprises two components: first, automation (the execution of technical tasks by machines operating without human intervention) and second, digitization (the conversion of text, pictures or sound into a digital form that can be processed by a computer) (Freyssinet, 2017). While neither process is entirely new, the ‘fourth industrial revolution’¹ is both faster in pace (requiring continuous upskilling of labour) and broader in scope (having the potential to drastically change the working practices of businesses across the globe) than previous industrial revolutions (WEF, 2016).

The net effects of these technological transformations on the number of jobs, and on their sectoral and geographical distribution, are as yet unknown and the subject of intense debate.² The impacts of some aspects of technological change are, however, becoming better understood: for example, the service sector will likely be most affected, and the possibilities for automation will depend more on the ‘routineness’ of the job concerned than on its sector or skills requirement (IOE, 2017: 7; ILO, 2016c). Jobs that require creativity or interpersonal skills should be less affected by automation; and there may be positive effects for women, whose work-life balance may be greatly improved by technological advances (Sorgner, Eckhardt and Krieger-Boden, 2017).

The ILO (2016c: 7) has identified three major challenges related to the fourth industrial revolution:

- i) increased polarization between low- and high-skilled jobs, triggered by the disappearance of medium-skilled jobs in developed economies and the lack of economic diversification in developing ones;
- ii) the need of workers, companies and communities for effective political and social management of the change process; and iii) the distribution of the technology-driven productivity gains between socioeconomic groups in a world characterized by rising inequality.

¹ The term loosely defines technology breakthroughs in several fields, including robotics, artificial intelligence, nanotechnology, quantum computing, 3D printing, autonomous vehicles, biotechnology, the internet of things, big data, Industry 4.0 and digital Taylorism (see Davis, 2016).

² The estimates of the potential for occupational automation vary widely. Frey and Osborne (2013) estimate that 47% of total US employment is at high risk of automation. Chang and Huynh (2016) find that up to 3 in 5 jobs in the ASEAN countries may disappear. Other authors are more cautious. A veteran observer of technological change (Autor, 2015) claims that machine learning and other recent advances may replace high-skilled occupations, but that while some jobs may disappear, others will just change as was the case in all previous technological revolutions. A study of OECD countries (Arntz, Gregory and Zierhan, 2016) reaches a similar conclusion, estimating that only 9% of OECD jobs (on average) are at risk of automation.

Both the ILO (2016c) and the International Organisation of Employers (IOE, 2017) argue that these challenges will play out differently in developed and developing economies. It is projected that by 2020 there will be a significant global shortage of high-skilled workers, especially affecting industrialized economies, and a global surplus of low-skilled workers, chiefly in low- and middle-income countries.³

In industrialized economies, this may lead to long-term and structural joblessness, especially of under-qualified youth, resulting in increased inequality and social tensions. Policies to promote sustainable economic growth and social inclusion will be needed to counter these tendencies. In developing economies, the problem is more complex. A shortage of high-skilled workers may hinder their development of high value-added industries, while automation may reduce their cost advantage in the provision of low-skilled labour. The net result of these changes may be an ‘onshoring’ of production from developing to industrialized economies.⁴ Finally, given that the share of the workforce in manufacturing in emerging economies such as Brazil and India has already plateaued at around 15%, the growth of manufacturing seems unlikely to provide a long-term solution to persistent unemployment in African and South American countries. These countries will need to find alternative ways to build up their middle classes and prevent a further rise in income inequality.

An entirely different set of challenges is presented by the emergence of the ‘platform’ economy. The spread of ‘crowdwork’ (work executed through online platforms that connect an infinite number of organizations, businesses and individuals) is already having a profound impact on the nature of work (De Stefano, 2016). Crowdwork is characterized by wide diversity, from menial and routine tasks to highly creative work. While the number of workers involved is very difficult to assess, it has been estimated that the principal platforms⁵ employed more than 21 million people in 2015 (Smith and Leberstein, 2015). The emergence of crowdworkers challenges existing notions of the employment relationship, and is making demands for new labour legislation to effectively regulate such forms of work (Prassl and Risak, 2016). Additional challenges relate to the uncoupling of work from the fixed workplace (Eurofound-ILO, 2017), and the return to results-based remuneration which may jeopardise some labour protections such as those on working time (Freyssinet, 2017). In response, some trade unions have started to offer specific services to crowdworkers. For example, the Freelancers Union in the USA acts as an advocacy group and provides insurance schemes to its members, who include crowdworkers as well as traditional freelancers. In Germany, IG Metall has launched a dedicated crowdworker platform.

The fourth industrial revolution poses important challenges to social dialogue at both macro- and micro-levels. At the ‘macro’ level, the challenge is to manage the impact of technological change so as to prevent the polarization of work in industrialized economies, to plan for a sustainable growth model in developing ones and, in all countries, to seek to distribute the proceeds of productivity growth in the most socially equitable way. Multi-dimensional social contracts (not dissimilar from traditional social pacts) may need to be

³ By 2020, the McKinsey Global Institute (2012: 2) projects a global shortage of high-skilled workers of up to 40 million (half of them in the advanced countries) and a global surplus of low-skilled workers of up to 95 million, chiefly in low and middle-income countries.

⁴ For example, the sports apparel firm Adidas plans to repatriate its production of footwear from developing countries to Germany and the USA (The Economist, 2017).

⁵ Including: Uber, Lyft, Sidecar, Handy, Taskrabbit, Care.com, Postmates, Amazon Mechanical Turk, Crowdflower, Crowdsourcing, Clickworker.

negotiated between governments and the social partners, which aim to bridge the skills and equality gaps that may be exacerbated as a result of technological change.

At the ‘micro’ level, one key challenge is to organize, service and represent millions of crowdworkers who wish to have their work recognized as constituting employment (Irani, 2015), as part of the broader proliferation of non-standard forms of employment (ILO, 2016a). This would pave the way towards their coverage under existing regulations and allow for the application of established servicing and organizational strategies by trade unions (Heery and Adler, 2004; Molina and Guardiancich, forthcoming).

Confronting these challenges will require great adaptability on the part of social dialogue institutions and the social partners. As the IOE (2017) has suggested, employers’ organizations may need to become more service-oriented, possibly opening up their membership to new kinds of businesses. Trade unions may have to undertake major organizational changes and deploy innovative strategies to be able to expand membership. Moreover, social dialogue institutions may themselves need to open up their deliberations, where appropriate, to new interlocutors whose perspectives may bring added value to those of employers’ and workers’ organizations.

1.1.2 Demographic shifts

The ILO’s understanding of demographic change centres on three dimensions: youth entrants to the labour market, the feminization of the labour force and population ageing (ILO, 2016d).

The employment prospects for younger cohorts are of pressing concern globally; the global economy will need to create some 600 million new jobs over the next few decades just to maintain current employment rates (S4YE, 2015),⁶ in a world which already has a jobs gap of 62 million (ILO, 2016e). Young people are already disproportionately affected by unemployment, underemployment, insecure jobs and informal work. Girls in general have lower educational attainment and a higher likelihood of becoming NEETs (not in education, employment or training) than boys.⁷

Several factors underpin this situation. The global financial crisis hit youth particularly hard, as they tend to be in less-protected, temporary jobs. Young workers are affected by a mismatch between their education and the new skills in demand, at both high- and low-skilled ends of the labour market. Increased life expectancy (especially in Africa) implies that, without new job creation, few positions exist for young labour market entrants. Finally, entire socioeconomic groups have poor employment prospects: including young women, people living in degraded urban areas or conflict zones, the rural poor, workers with a disability and so on.

Turning next to the situation of women, they still have a subordinate labour market position relative to men on all counts, not only in terms of the persistent pay gap. The global

⁶ According to S4YE (2015), in 2014, about 500 million youth were unemployed, underemployed, or working in insecure jobs. Another 621 million (mainly women) were not in employment, education or training (NEET). The number of unemployed youth globally reached 71 million in 2016 (ILO, 2016e), meaning a youth unemployment rate of 13.1%. This is roughly 40% of the world’s total unemployed. Youth are up to four times more likely to be unemployed than adults. Unemployment levels are up to 10% higher for young women than young men.

⁷ Boys have higher school attendance levels across ages and regions, except in industrialized economies where girls are more likely to be attending school. The difference between the sexes is most pronounced in the Middle East and North Africa region.

participation rate of women is still 27% lower than men, with wide variation between countries (ILO, 2017d).⁸ And when women do participate, their prospects of being unemployed, engaged in unpaid work or in occupations traditionally regarded as female jobs are higher.

Finally, population ageing, due to increased life expectancy along with lower fertility rates, is fast becoming a concern for almost all countries, and not only for industrialized economies. According to the UN (2017), 13% of the world population is aged 60 or above at present; by 2050, this share will be greater than 25% on all continents except Africa. The effect on the age dependency ratio will be dramatic.⁹

An ageing population poses the twin problems of first, providing adequate and sustainable social security (old-age pensions, affordable health and home care) for the elderly and second, preparing labour markets to absorb an older workforce. Regarding old-age pensions, for example, a combination of contributory public pensions and non-contributory schemes is now recommended by several international organizations (see ILO, 2017e; Holzmann, Palmer and Robalino, 2012; OECD, 2015a), in addition to comprehensive measures encouraging work at an older age (see OECD, 2006; 2015b; European Commission, 2011). Two contrasting trends have been noted. On the positive side, social security coverage, especially in developing countries, has improved.¹⁰ On the negative side, a contraction of public pension schemes has been witnessed during the 2010-16 period linked in many instances to the global financial crisis.¹¹

Within such a complex scenario, how can social dialogue help lower youth unemployment, close gender gaps, increase the employment of older workers and modernize social security systems? It should be recalled that none of these individual issues is particularly new; rather, they are being combined in new ways. Tripartite social pacts, concluded in countries as diverse as Chile, Italy, Slovenia, South Korea and Zimbabwe, have given the social partners a fundamental role in decision-making regarding social security reforms, education and training, labour market regulations, active labour market policies (ALMPs) and so on (see Baccaro and Galindo, forthcoming). Social dialogue is of particular relevance to promote gender equality in the labour market and in society. Yet, a global review of national social dialogue institutions (Muller, forthcoming) confirms the persistent under-representation of women in such bodies across all regions, which needs to be corrected.

The International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC, 2017a) and the IOE (IOE, 2017) agree that, to confront growing youth unemployment, further improvement of school-to-work transition measures, especially through investments in education and vocational training, is paramount. There are, moreover, important potential complementarities between

⁸ In 2017, the largest gender gap in labour market participation rates is faced by women in emerging economies (31%), followed by developed (16%) and developing ones (12%). The gaps are widest in the Arab States, North Africa and South Asia (over 50%). In these regions, female participation is lowest (at less than 30%, compared to the global average of 49%).

⁹ The UN (2017) estimates that by 2050 the ratio of the working age population (aged 20-64) to older persons (aged 65+) may fall below 2 in five Latin American, seven Asian and 24 European countries.

¹⁰ Since 2000, the number of countries in which social protection coverage exceeds 90% has increased from 34 to 53, while the number in which coverage is less than 20% decreased from 73 to 51 (ILO, 2017e).

¹¹ Advanced economies, such as the members of the EU and the OECD, have introduced automatic stabilizing mechanisms, limited indexation and raised the retirement age (Carone et al., 2016).

demographic trends in different world regions: the emigration of younger workers from developing economies may help resolve skill shortages and unsustainable social security systems in industrialized ones (see Barr, 2012), while investment in the care economy for the ageing populations in the latter may boost employment (ITUC, 2017).

Although robust evidence is lacking on the participation of the social partners in decision-making in these crucial areas, anecdotal evidence indicates that their role is often limited (Ghellab and Papadakis, 2011). A return to tripartite policy concertation is a *sine qua non* to guarantee the future of the social contract. Indeed, the ILO Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization (2008) underlines that “*social dialogue and tripartism [are] the most appropriate methods for [...] facilitating consensus building on relevant national and international policies that impact on employment and decent work strategies and programmes*”.¹²

1.1.3 Climate change

Having been, until recently, a fringe domain of study, climate change has arguably become the single most pressing issue on current research and policy agendas. Near universal consensus that “*human influence has been the dominant cause of the observed warming since the mid-20th century*”, as articulated by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (Cook et al., 2016), resulted in the adoption of the Paris Agreement in 2015, which has been signed (as of October 2017) by 195 Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). The Paris Agreement aims to mitigate global warming. In order to stay well within the 2°C warming limit, greenhouse gas emissions should be reduced to zero by between 2055 and 2070, so avoiding dramatic consequences including major losses in productivity (ILO, 2013a). According to the ITUC (2016), entire economic sectors must transform their carbon footprint and all jobs must be made ‘climate-compatible’. This implies a creative destruction of jobs, not dissimilar to that engendered by technological advances.

There is relative consensus that the investment needed to address climate change has substantial job-generating potential.¹³ The type of newly created ‘green jobs’ that the ILO promotes are “*decent jobs that contribute to preserve or restore the environment, be they in traditional sectors such as manufacturing and construction, or in new, emerging green sectors such as renewable energy and energy efficiency.*”¹⁴

Social dialogue has a key role to play in managing the transition towards environmentally sustainable economies and societies, as highlighted in the Guidelines for a just transition (ILO, 2015) and the Director-General’s Report to the 106th Session of the ILC (ILO, 2017c). The guidelines spell out the main principles underpinning a just transition as well as the key policy areas that must be addressed, and they invoke the need for consensus building through social dialogue.

¹² Adopted by the ILC at its 97th Session, Geneva, 2008.

¹³ In 2010, ITUC (2016) estimated that just 12 countries investing 2% of GDP each year for five years in major sectors could create as many as 48 million jobs. The ILO (2013a) reviewed 24 recent global, regional and country studies, which basically agree that net employment gains may be realized of up to 60 million jobs. The OECD (2017a) predicts that in the renewable energy sector alone, up to 20 million jobs could be created worldwide by 2030.

¹⁴ Green jobs aim mainly to: improve energy and raw materials efficiency, limit greenhouse gas emissions, minimize waste and pollution, protect and restore ecosystems and support adaptation to the effects of climate change.

It has been argued that inequality and environmental degradation are mutually reinforcing. On the one hand, rich nations effectively ‘outsource’ the environmental damage linked to their excessive consumption habits to poorer regions. On the other hand, environmental degradation in poorer countries exacerbates the underlying inequality. Hence, social dialogue within and between countries is needed to manage the distribution of environmental and climate change-related costs and benefits between different socioeconomic groups and geographical areas.

The greening of the economy will have a differential impact on low- and high-skilled jobs (OECD, 2017a). Globally, the evidence shows that, so far, climate change policies are mostly affecting low-skilled jobs; many such jobs are being lost but new jobs are also being created in roughly similar numbers. Thus, there is major potential disruption/displacement for the low-skilled segment of the workforce. By contrast, although smaller absolute numbers are involved, there is a net gain of jobs in the medium- and high-skilled end of the labour market, so these workers potentially stand to benefit more. In this context, social dialogue is needed to ease the discrepancies between sectors and to channel investment in education and training in order to close emerging skills gaps.

Finally, more inclusive social dialogue will be needed when devising a sustainable development model for the future, for example and as appropriate, involving civil society associations dedicated to the cause of environmental protection. The social partners, for their part, may need to embrace new forms of environmental regulation, which may, for example, impose certain limitations on business operations, give rise to new tax obligations or possibly reduce employment in certain sectors.

1.1.4 Accelerating globalization

The ILO has, for some two decades, been promoting a socially just globalization (see World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization, 2004). The theme of the ILO-AICESIS Conference in 2015 was social dialogue and workplace compliance, including in global supply chains (GSCs) (ILO-AICESIS, 2015).

According to the ILO Working Party on the Social Dimensions of the Liberalization of International Trade: “*Economic globalization can be simply defined as a process of rapid economic integration between countries. It has been driven by the increasing liberalization of international trade and foreign direct investment, and by freer capital flows.*”¹⁵ In this paper, we concentrate on two intertwined aspects of globalization that directly impact social dialogue, namely Multi-National Enterprises (MNEs) and the proliferation of GSCs.¹⁶

The ILO-AICESIS (2015) conference identified workplace compliance as one of the major challenges posed by GSCs, particularly in developing economies. Much of the employment generated by MNEs is in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) which are found in the lower tiers of their supply chains. It is precisely here where the biggest decent work deficits exist. Many such enterprises are informal, and include home-based and other ‘non-standard’ workers.

In order to prevent violations of labour rights along GSCs, several types of intervention are possible: the strict enforcement of national and international laws by the State (Ruggie,

¹⁵ <http://www.ilo.org/public/english/standards/reIm/gb/docs/gb276/sdl-1.htm>

¹⁶ According to the ILO (2016), the term ‘global supply chains’ refers to the cross-border organization of the activities required to produce goods or services and bring them to consumers through various phases of development, production and delivery.

2008), private voluntary initiatives by MNEs (ILO, 2013), and the effective application and independent monitoring of codes of conduct by international bodies (ILO, 2017b; OECD, 2011; 2017). The ILO Tripartite Declaration of Principles concerning Multinational Enterprises and Social Policy, revised in 2017, contains a number of recommendations on inclusive economic development and social progress.

What are the implications of these trends for social dialogue? One direct challenge relates to a potential tension between a state's wish to attract foreign direct investment (FDI) and the need to protect workers' rights. The ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work of 1998 sets out a universal floor of four basic rights that must be respected in all countries.¹⁷ However, before making investment decisions, MNEs assess all aspects of the business environment in potential host countries, including their labour legislation, tax incentives and so on (see Jensen, 2008). In order to attract FDI, the state may favour a unilateral approach to decision-making, rather than engaging in social dialogue. MNEs also usually have a direct line of communication with the government, and are not members of national employers' organizations. This may further undermine the role of the social partners in national policymaking.

Another challenge to social dialogue arises due to a 'decoupling' of the main locus of decision-making of MNEs (i.e. in their headquarters in their main country of registration) from that of social dialogue at national level. How can national social dialogue institutions elevate their role beyond that of considering how best to manage the impact of decisions taken elsewhere? Further challenges relate to how ESC-Sis can effectively understand and address the perspectives of the myriad of SMEs engaged in GSCs; and how they can build bridges for cooperation with the many stakeholder groups with an interest in the issues at stake (e.g. consumers, environmentalists, human rights activists and so on)? A recent ILO study (Pyke, 2017) concluded that national social dialogue institutions have the potential, despite several obstacles identified, to engage with MNEs and help bridge the governance gap in GSCs.

1.2 The fundamental role of social dialogue and tripartism

There is much to be learnt from the post-WWII history of social dialogue that can help pave the way for it to confront successfully the huge challenge of shaping the future world of work. The social contract underwritten between employers and workers during the *Wirtschaftswunder* (the 30-year period of strong economic growth after 1945), aimed at reining in inflationary pressures but managed also to distribute the gains of growth between labour and capital (Schmitter, 1979). Once 'stagflation' hit during the 1970s, social dialogue aimed to preserve employment in a time of difficult domestic economic conditions and increased global competition. The social pacts which emerged in the 1980s and 1990s generated unexpectedly positive results, including in those countries lacking strong institutions for social dialogue (Baccaro and Galindo, forthcoming; Avdagić, Rhodes and Visser, 2011). Finally, at the beginning of the Great Recession of 2008-09, and before fiscal consolidation policies took hold, social dialogue processes once again succeeded in saving hundreds of thousands of jobs amid the worst recession since WWII (Ghellab, 2009; Freyssinet, 2010; Guardiancich, 2012).

Yet, despite the positive role played by social dialogue over the past 75 years, changes in the world of work are generating major new challenges. The spread of national social

¹⁷ These are: freedom of association and recognition of the right to collective bargaining; and the elimination of forced labour, child labour and discrimination in employment and occupation.

dialogue institutions and increased ratification of Convention No. 144¹⁸ have not always translated into positive results on the ground. Income inequality within countries is increasing (ILO, 2017; OECD, 2015), industrial relations are witnessing deregulation (Baccaro and Howell, forthcoming), collective bargaining coverage is declining (OECD, 2017b: 138), and social pacts are less ambitious than in the past (Molina and Guardiancich, 2017; Baccaro and Galindo, forthcoming).

There is a growing consensus that conservative and social-democratic forces, Keynesians and monetarists, globalists and nationalists and, in particular, governments, employers and workers can come together in the fight against global inequality (Freysinet, 2017). Inequality not only worsens many social indicators, such as corruption, crime and health (Wilkinson and Pickett, 2009), but also slows economic growth (Ostry, Berg and Tsangarides, 2014; OECD, 2014). Indeed, at the launch of the Global Commission on the Future of Work in August 2017, the Swedish Prime Minister, Stefan Löfven (co-chairperson), said: “*Equality—between countries and within countries—is the defining issue of our time.*” Social dialogue has much to offer in terms of closing the global equality divide.

The overarching objective of social dialogue is to reconcile the interests of employers, workers and government, thereby disproving the critique that policy concertation is always and necessarily a zero-sum game (ILO, 2016b). In the words of the ILO Director General, Mr Guy Ryder: “*Social dialogue and tripartism have played a major role throughout history. We think they will be even more needed in the future to find appropriate solutions to the challenges posed by the transformation of the world of work.*”¹⁹

1.3 The ILO-AICESIS survey on social dialogue and the future of work

The survey questionnaire was distributed electronically to ESC-SIs around the world. It consisted of multiple choice and open-ended questions, organized in four main sections as follows:

1. The current status of social dialogue. The section included questions on the status of social dialogue and tripartism, including such issues as the participation of the social partners, challenges to social dialogue and the strategies and responses adopted by the ESC-SIs.
2. The future of work and the challenges facing ESC-SIs. Questions in this section addressed the knowledge and engagement of ESC-SIs in action to address the four mega-drivers of change.
3. The perceived role of social dialogue institutions in dealing with future of work-related challenges, including strengthening the influence of the social partners.
4. Support ESC-SIs need from the ILO and AICESIS.

Forty-four ESC-SIs responded to the survey questionnaire. Around 60% of the responses came from AICESIS member institutions and 40% came from non-members.

¹⁸ The ILO Tripartite Consultation (International Labour Standards) Convention, 1976 (No. 144), has been identified as one of the most significant instruments from the point of view of governance in the ILO Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization (ILO, 2017a). As of October 2017, it has been ratified by 139 countries.

¹⁹ Guy Ryder, ILO Director General, Singapore, 26 October 2015

Some of the institutions in the latter category are in the process of applying for AICESIS membership.

The list of responding institutions by region is shown in the table below.

Region	No. of responses	ESC-SIs
Africa	9 (20.4%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Conseil national économique et social (Algeria); - Haut Conseil du Dialogue Social (Burkina Faso); - Comité National de Dialogue Social (CNDS) (Burundi); - Comité National du Dialogue Social (Chad); - Conseil Economique et Social (Guinea); - Conseil Economique Social Environnemental et Culturel (Côte d'Ivoire); - Conseil Economique Social et Environnemental (Morocco); - Conseil Economic, Social et Environnemental (Senegal); - Groupe de Travail Tripartite du Contrat Social (Tunisia);
Americas and the Caribbean	4 (9.1%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Superior Labor Council of Chile; - Consejo Superior de Trabajo (Costa Rica); - Consejo Economico y Social (Dominican Republic); - Ministry of Labour of Grenada
Arab States	2 (4.5%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Jordan Economic and Social Council; - Economic and Social Council of the Occupied Palestinian Territories
Asia-Pacific	10 (22.7 %)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ready Made Garment - Tripartite Consultation Committee (RMG TCC) (Bangladesh); - Cook Islands National Tripartite Labour Advisory Council; - China Economic and Social Council; - Ministry of Manpower of Indonesia; - The Labour Policy Council of Japan; - Economic and Social Development Commission of Korea; - Samoa National Tripartite Forum; - Ministry of Manpower of Singapore (in collaboration with the social partners); - Ministry of Labour, Trade Union Relations and Sabaragamuwa Development of Sri Lanka; - Tripartite Labour Advisory Council of Vanuatu
Europe	19 (43.2%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Public Council of Armenia; - Conseil National du Travail (CNT), (Belgium); - Consejo Económico y Social de España; - Economic and Social Council of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia; - Conseil économique social et environnemental (France); - Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Affairs of Georgia (on Tripartite Social Partnership Commission); - Economic and Social Council of Greece (OKE); - Consiglio Nazionale dell'Economia e del Lavoro (CNEL) (Italy); - Conseil économique et social (Luxembourg); - Malta Council for Economic and Social Development (MCESD); - Social Council of Montenegro; - xii) Sociaal Economische Raad (SER) (the Netherlands); - xiii) Norwegian Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs; - xiv) Economic and Social Council of Romania; - xv) Social Dialogue Council of Poland; - Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation; - Social and Economic Council of Republic of Serbia; - Economic and Social Council of the Republika Srpska (part of Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH)); - National Tripartite Social and Economic Council (Ukraine)

II. Social dialogue and the future of work

Sections II, III and IV of this report present the key findings of the ILO-AICESIS survey. Percentage data refer to the (proportion of) ESC-SIs which responded to the individual question. The sections broadly follow the structure of the questionnaire that was distributed to ESC-SIs.

2.1 The current status of social dialogue institutions

Since the global economic and financial crisis broke out almost a decade ago, social dialogue has been under strain in many countries. In others, conversely, it was strengthened in order to cope better with emerging challenges. More than half (55%) of the ESC-SIs had undergone major restructuring in the past few years, leading to substantial changes in their mandate, composition, structure, method of functioning, and so on.

The main ways in which the institutions adapted to change and intensified economic pressures were through improving their representativeness and effectiveness. More specifically, changes were introduced to the following aspects of the ESC-SIs:

- **Mandate:** France, Morocco and Senegal started addressing environmental issues;
- **Composition:** the representation of youth and women was increased (France), and new groups were represented in Jordan (young entrepreneurs), Belgium (the ‘social profit sector’), or strengthened in Malta (members involved in social and civil dialogue);
- **Structure:** the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia established a tripartite Secretariat to support the activities and technical standing committees, and the Dominican Republic recruited technical experts; Tunisia enacted legislation to create the National Council for Social Dialogue (CNDS) in July 2017 (not yet operational); Grenada’s tripartite-plus Committee of Social Partners (comprising also churches, NGOs and civil society organizations) started operating in 2012;
- **Method of functioning:** Luxembourg started formulating pluriennial plans and evaluations, and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia started developing annual Operational Programmes and Rules of Procedure.

One of the institutions to undergo a major overhaul is the Economic and Social Development Council (CDES) of Brazil (see Box 1).²⁰ The CDES is closely connected to the President, to whom it directly issues opinions. Sixty per cent of its recommendations are implemented, indicating its high degree of effectiveness.

²⁰ The CDES did not respond to the survey questionnaire, but provided some information.

Box 1: Restructuring of the CDES in Brazil

In 2016, following a presidential request for a partial re-composition of its membership, the CDES Secretariat proposed four selection criteria, namely: i) influence on public opinion; ii) activism in social, cultural and business issues; iii) economic relevance of the represented sector; and iv) social and political impact of the represented institution. Council members now include researchers, entrepreneurs, trade union leaders, artists and professionals from a variety of areas, thereby better representing a diverse society, broadening the scope of opinions, and reflecting the role of emerging economic sectors and social movements. Gender, race and regional balance complemented the scope of the selection criteria. As the new composition of the CDES transcends workers and employers, the Brazilian federal government also created a new tripartite council specialized in labour relations: the National Labour Council.

Some countries' ESC-SIs experienced quite dramatic events. In Estonia and Mauritius²¹, the ESC-SIs were effectively abolished. In Italy, the CNEL witnessed a drastic reduction of staff in 2011 and, in December 2016, the Government submitted a proposal to abolish it, which was later rejected in a referendum. The CNEL is currently undergoing restructuring.

Two thirds of ESC-SIs (30) had a strategic plan in place to enhance the role and impact of social dialogue in policy/law making. The vast majority of these plans foresaw more regular tripartite and tripartite-plus consultations (29) as well as information-sharing (25) at the national level. Far fewer involved consultations at industry, cross-industry or enterprise levels; only 14 ESC-SIs devised plans that rely on collective bargaining and ten on workplace cooperation.

Regardless of whether or not a formal plan had been adopted, ESC-SIs still carried out actions to enhance their role in policymaking. These measures can be categorized into three groups.

First, several ESC-SIs had formulated their objectives and strategic action plan, ensured their fit within a broader developmental framework and envisaged the monitoring and evaluation of their implementation. A number of ESC-SIs aimed at promoting social cohesion: for example, the French Economic, Social and Environmental Council (CESE) strategic orientations for 2015-2020,²² the Strategic Plan for Development in Côte d'Ivoire and the Strategic Plan of the Ministry of Manpower 2015-19 in Indonesia. Strengthening social dialogue, collective bargaining and ESC-SIs' capacities were at the centre of the programme of the Economic and Social Council of Luxembourg, the action plan of the Economic and Social Council of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the State Strategy of Labour Market Formation and its Action Plan for 2015-2018 of Georgia (formulated with the help of the ILO) and various opinions of the CESE in France.

Second, many institutions had strengthened their technical capacity, structure, effectiveness, influence and functioning. Vanuatu was envisaging a set of measures to revitalize the Tripartite Labour Advisory Council and introduce a mediation service. The Economic and Social Development Commission of the Republic of Korea was reinforcing its representation of women, young persons, self-employed persons and non-regular workers. The Social and Economic Council of the Netherlands held roundtables to share information with Parliament and the broader public. In Malta, the Council for Economic and Social Development (MCESD) had formulated a strategy to reinforce its capacity (see Box 2). In 2016-17, the National Committee for Social Dialogue (CNDS) in Chad stepped up its support to the bipartite social dialogue committees in six branches of the public sector (Health and Social Action; Communication and Information; Economic and Financial Administration; Natural Resources; Education; and General Administration) to enable them

²¹ Neither country responded to the survey

²² <https://iena.lecese.fr/sites/default/files/plenieres/160223CRI.pdf>

facilitate consultations between the government (as employer) and workers' representatives and to resolve labour disputes. Also, a Tripartite Technical Committee, charged with establishing lasting social peace, was established within the CNDS and promotes information sharing on the country's economic prospects using electronic means and a dedicated website. The Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation improved its communication and participation in policymaking through public hearings and 'zero readings' (public examination) of draft legislation and through the project 'An Hour with the Minister', through which the Minister of Labour responded on various social protection and labour market issues in 2016. In Singapore, in addition to several tripartite committees such as the National Wages Council and the Tripartite Committee on Employability of Older Workers, the government and the social partners jointly set up the Tripartite Alliance Limited (TAL) in 2016. TAL addresses shared priorities such as advocating fair and progressive workplace practices, and helps employers and workers to manage labour disputes.

Box 2: Strengthening the capacity of the MCESD in Malta

The Council for Economic and Social Development (MCESD) has formulated a strategic plan addressing five key areas of improvement:

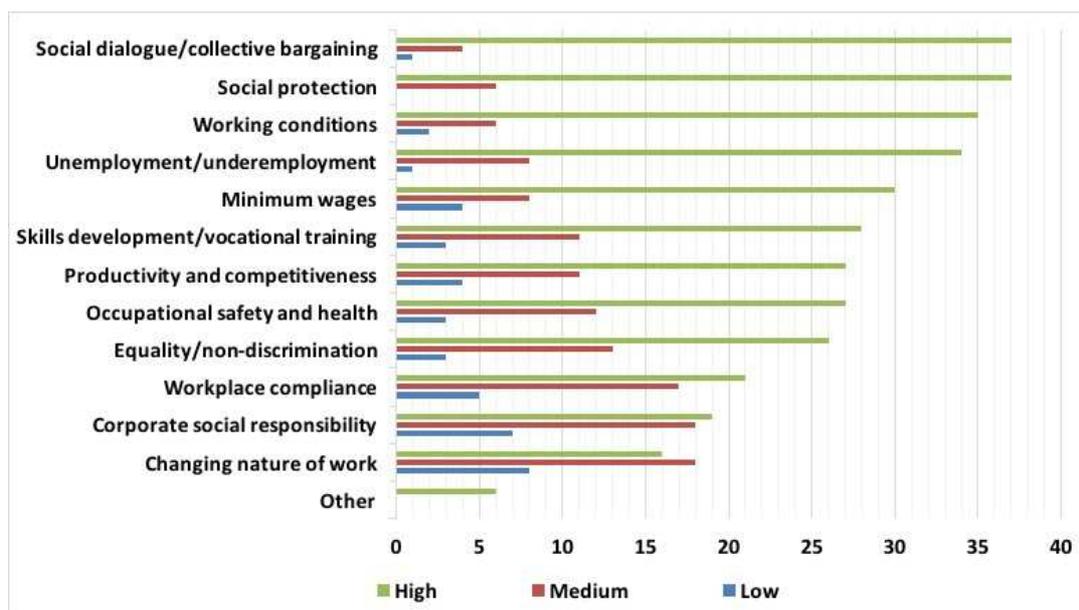
1. Efficiency in the structure and operation of the Council - Defining a work plan and a renewed structure consisting of three levels: a Working Group, Bureau and Plenary.
2. Absolute autonomy - Reinforcing the concept of 'open government' where all parties are given the opportunity to have their views represented.
3. Relevance - Setting up of working groups, research and a communication strategy.
4. Administrative resources and consultation services - Contribution of experts and deployment of necessary resources; and
5. Financial independence and sustainability - Investment in research and new premises to cater for the needs of the Council.

Third, a number of ESC-SIs had facilitated social dialogue, sound industrial relations, collective bargaining and the conclusion of collective agreements. Several ESC-SIs were active at the sectoral or enterprise levels: the Ready Made Garment - Tripartite Consultation Committee (RMG TCC) of Bangladesh was established in March 2017, the Belgian National Labour Council facilitated a bi-annual inter-professional agreement, the Dutch Social and Economic Council assured well-functioning cooperation at firm level. At the regional level, the Social and Economic Council of Greece planned to establish an Integrated Regional Consultation Mechanism. The Economic and Social Council of the Dominican Republic carried out tripartite-plus consultations that resulted in the conclusion of three social pacts (on education, electricity sector and tax reforms), and the Social, Economic and Environmental Council in Morocco promoted a systematic, participatory approach to broad consultation on (mainly social) reforms. Finally, the ESC of the Occupied Palestinian Territories promoted social dialogue on a broad array of socioeconomic topics (for instance on social security).

2.2 The policy priorities of social dialogue institutions

Figure 2 presents the stated policy priorities of ESC-SIs. Four areas were ranked highest: social dialogue, collective bargaining and employment relations; social protection; working conditions; as well as unemployment and underemployment. Lowest priority was accorded to workplace compliance; corporate social responsibility; and, of particular interest in the context of this Conference, to the changing nature of work.

Figure 2. Importance given by ESC-SIs to thematic fields within the world of work



Several ESC-SIs assigned high priority to all, or all but one, categories: Algeria, Belgium, Chile, France, Grenada, Japan, Jordan, Occupied Palestinian Territories, Republic of Korea, the Netherlands and Vanuatu.

Often, the priorities reflected the domestic or regional context. For example, with regards to the changing nature of work, ESC-SIs in industrialized countries, such as Belgium, France, Greece, Japan, Republic of Korea, the Netherlands, Norway and Singapore, tended to assign it high importance, whereas those of low- and middle-income countries (such as Armenia, Bangladesh, Burundi, Chad, Guinea, Montenegro, Republika Srpska (BiH), but also China) gave it less importance.

Unemployment and underemployment, especially of youth, was ranked high in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Republika Srpska (BiH), whose ESC-SIs had drawn up specific employment action plans.

Working conditions were given high priority in Bangladesh, reflecting recent major workplace accidents (see Box 3). Similarly, occupational safety and health was a concern for the Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation.

Box 3: Bangladesh ready-made garment sector (RMG)

The RMG sector in Bangladesh accounts for 11% of GDP and 82% of exports; it employs approximately 4 million people, 60% of whom are women. The stability of this sector is critical to Bangladesh's economy. In recent years, the sector has experienced several serious industrial accidents. In response, the Government pledged to improve working conditions and workers' safety, in cooperation with the employers' and workers' organizations. Bangladesh's participation in the EU 'Everything But Arms' scheme, and the Special Paragraph adopted by the Committee on the Application of Standards (CAS) of the ILC at its 105th Session in 2016,²³ have also encouraged the development of social dialogue in the country. It is within this context that the RMG Tripartite Consultative Committee (RMG TCC) was established in March 2017. The Committee comprises senior leaders of each of the constituencies, and is chaired by the Minister of Labour. The Committee monitors the situation in the RMG sector and reviews related laws, policies and plans. It convenes at least three times a year and advises the government on measures to strengthen labour-management relations and improve productivity, while taking into account the country's socio-economic context.

Working conditions and workplace compliance were policy priorities highlighted by Singapore. Here, the 'Work Right Initiative', launched in 2012, aimed at educating workers on their rights and obligations as well as facilitating workplace inspections. The initiative was recognized in the 2015 UN Public Service Awards, in the category 'Promoting Whole-of-Government Approaches in the Information Age', for the Asia-Pacific region.

Social insurance and social assistance were stressed in a number of cases, including the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Indonesia, Morocco and Senegal. A key achievement of the Social and Economic Council (OKE) in Greece was the Opinion it gave on the reform of the social security system, during the period of fiscal consolidation. Despite the intense public controversy, the OKE was able to produce unanimous conclusions and proposals for welfare state reform. In the Russian Federation, in order to tackle the persistent problem of arrears in salary payment, the Civic Chamber instituted a hotline.

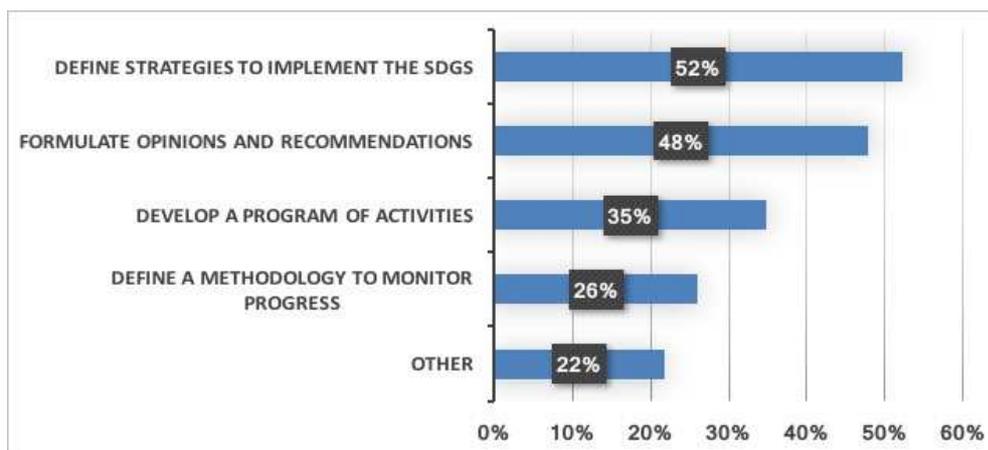
With regards to equality and non-discrimination, ESC-SIs in several countries took initiatives, such as the National Strategy of Action for Women 2017-2022 and a reform to the system of job quotas for persons with disabilities adopted in the Russian Federation, a national database on disability in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, a series of reports on gender equality and the integration of people with a disability by the Economic, Social and Environmental Council in Morocco and promotion of women's rights in Senegal.

The ESC-SIs in Francophone African states, such as Chad, Morocco and Senegal, were all interested in developing procedures and measures, through national social dialogue, to ensure sustained social peace into the future.

The challenges related to the future of work overlap with many of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Twenty-three ESC-SIs had discussed the 2030 Agenda. Figure 3 presents the outcomes of these discussions.

²³http://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:13100:0::NO::P13100_COMMENT_ID:3284577

Figure 3. Outcomes of the discussion of SDGs



Roughly half of ESC-SIs had defined a strategy to implement the SDGs, and slightly fewer had formulated opinions and recommendations. In several cases, ESC-SIs had collaborated with external (usually governmental) institutions. For example, the OKE in Greece regularly cooperated with the government agency responsible for implementing the Agenda 2030, in order to facilitate bottom-up dialogue with the social partners and civil society. It also issued the Opinion on the UN 2030 Agenda: Priority SDGs for Greece. In Algeria, the National Economic and Social Council (among others) organized a ‘National awareness day on the SDGs’ bringing together experts and civil society organizations active in the field of sustainable development, to share experiences and develop proposals. The High Labour Council of Costa Rica has collaborated in activities with the Ministry of Planning and Economic Policy and the UNDP. According to Vanuatu’s Tripartite Labour Advisory Council, the Departmental Business Plans and Ministerial Corporate Plans are aligned with the SDGs. The Department of Economic and Technical Cooperation of the Labour Ministry in Grenada is responsible for coordinating SDG-related education and awareness programmes. The CES of Luxembourg has regular exchanges with the high council for sustainable development. The Russian Federation’s Civic Chamber conducts hearings on sustainability and corporate social responsibility with large enterprises. Finally, the National Labour Council of Belgium has been consulted on the 2030 Agenda with the objective of playing a leading role in defining decent work goals, targets and indicators.

Around a third of ESC-SIs (35%) had developed a program of activities, such as training or awareness raising, and about a quarter had defined a monitoring methodology, for example, by developing a national statistical information system. Regarding monitoring of progress on the SDGs, the SER in the Netherlands participated in a platform with many stakeholders. In Belgium, the National Labour Council argued that SDG implementation should take place within an integrated and coherent framework between stakeholders at European and national levels. The Council has proposed to evaluate a number of SDGs on behalf of the social partners and highlighted the importance of developing indicators to measure progress, in particular with regard to decent work. Finally, the CESE in France indicated that the government had formulated the ‘French policy of international cooperation in the framework of the 2030 agenda of sustainable development’.

Among those ESC-SIs that had not discussed the SDGs, roughly one third stated that they had insufficient information or a lack of awareness, and a similar proportion that they did not have the mandate, or that they had planned, but not yet carried out, the necessary debates. A number of institutions had been established too recently (e.g. the High Council for Social Dialogue in Burkina Faso and the CNDS in Tunisia), or were currently undergoing reform (for example, the CNEL in Italy). The CESE of Morocco highlighted the fact that the

SDGs are all of a cross-cutting nature and so, even if they are not specifically on the agenda, they were addressed during discussions on related policies or challenges.

2.3 The involvement of the social partners

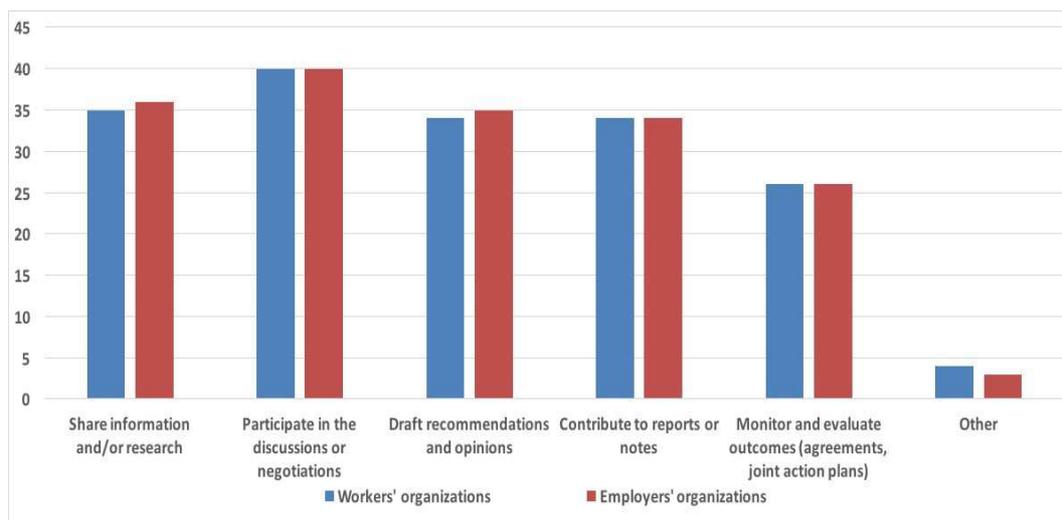
The ESC-SIs were asked to assess the effective participation of workers' and employers' organizations in their operations. There were very few negative assessments in this respect; more than half of the ESC-SIs considered both worker and employer members to be very active participants.

For example, the Russian Federation's Civic Chamber explained that discussions were held on topical issues, such as means of improving sustainability and corporate responsibility reporting as well as the development of human capital. The Decent Work Country Program 2017-2020 of Samoa requires extended collaboration between all social partners at the National Tripartite Forum. All three Benelux ESC-SIs and that of Singapore deemed the social partners as the real motors behind their consultations and negotiations, with their involvement assured in all phases and at all levels of decision-making. The Council for Economic and Social Development of Malta described the participation of the social partners in Working Groups, research initiatives and council meetings as very energetic. In the Social Council of Montenegro, the social partners were essential for the preparation of draft laws in the fields of employment and labour relations. In France, the active involvement of the social partners was reflected in their regular attendance at the weekly meetings of the sections of the Economic and Social Council, in the quality of the outputs (about 20 opinions per year) and in the follow-up by the government and other institutions to the Council's recommendations.

Some ESC-SIs nonetheless pointed to a less positive picture. The Italian CNEL stated that the participation of workers' and employers' organizations had been put on hold due to ongoing restructuring. The ESC in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia indicated that the frequent resort to shortened legislative procedures deprived the unions and employers' organizations of their due influence. The Social Dialogue Council in Poland had been experiencing some tensions, reflected in the different assessments made by the social partners. While the unions recognized some progress (for example, the existence of strategic plans for consultation and information sharing), they also pointed out that social dialogue had been challenged recently. The employers, for their part, stated that social dialogue had borne positive fruits (e.g. the provision of elderly care, youth employment, accompanying measures for workers with family responsibilities). The Tripartite Labour Advisory Council of Vanuatu indicated that its current institutional configuration promoted only the occasional participation of employers' organizations. Finally, Norway represented a special case: although there was no specific national social dialogue institution, workers and employers were involved in all major policy discussions. Social dialogue was formalized through regular meetings led by the Prime Minister or the Minister for Labour and Social Affairs.

Figure 4 presents the responses regarding the nature of the engagement of the social partners in the activities of ESC-SIs. Participation in discussions or negotiations was the most common activity, followed closely by sharing of information and /or research results, drafting recommendations and opinions and contributing to reports or notes on the topics discussed. Monitoring and evaluation of outcomes, such as agreements or joint action plans was the least common activity (but was still mentioned by 26% of respondents). The responses for employers' and workers' organizations were almost identical.

Figure 4. Means of engagement of the social partners in the activities of ESC-SIs



Several ESC-SIs provided additional information on this topic. With regards to the participation in discussions or negotiations, the CNDS of Burundi specified that the social partners also participated in the mediation of labour conflicts and the SER of the Netherlands posited that agenda-setting was also an important activity. The Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation explained that both of the social partners work on citizens' appeals and complaints on labour market issues. Depending on the number of received complaints, the Chamber opened hot lines and launched monitoring on specific issues. Similarly, it launched the All-Russian Monitoring of Employment Services to deal with labour market imbalances (especially regarding mismatches between the supply and demand for specialized skills). Recommendations based on the results of monitoring were sent to the relevant authorities. The CNT in Belgium indicated that, in cases where social dialogue did not lead to consensus on the issue under consideration, each of the parties provided the Council with a separate contribution to the opinions or reports issued.

Some ESC-SIs, such as the RMG TCC in Bangladesh and the High Labour Council in Chile, highlighted the limited organizational and financial capacity of workers' organizations, in particular, to allow for their meaningful participation in their work.

2.4 The role of ESC-SIs in facing the challenges of the future of work

The survey sought to assess the ESC-SIs' understanding of, and involvement in tackling, what they perceived to be the most pressing future of work challenges.

The three most prominent issues were unemployment (including youth unemployment), respect for fundamental principles and rights and rising informality. Slightly less importance was given to increasing inequality and to improving work-life balance. New forms of employment and migration issues were accorded medium-high priority. Exceptionally, in Tunisia, the conduct of multinational enterprises (MNEs) was perceived as a particular challenge.

Creation of quality jobs for youth and youth unemployment/underemployment were among the labour-related challenges in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Greece (as a direct consequence of the crisis and related fiscal consolidation), Malta and the Occupied Palestinian Territories. In the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the Government had developed policies to promote the employability and job opportunities for

youth. In Belgium, the social partners also worked to ensure employment for young people and improve their labour market situation. In Luxembourg, the Economic and Social Council considered unemployment to be the top priority. In Indonesia, low education and human resources were driving joblessness.

The effective management of migration was noted as a challenge in several European countries, particularly in Belgium, Greece and Malta. In the Russian Federation, several regional and interregional fora had been set up on labour migration.

The impact on the labour market of information and communications technology (ICT)/robotics, energy transition and globalization ranked high on the agendas of ESC-SIs in Belgium and the Netherlands and the proliferation of non-standard forms of employment in the Netherlands and Malta. The issue of skills mismatches and related lifelong learning featured as priorities in the Netherlands and Morocco.

A few ESC-SIs mentioned other problems more specific to their national contexts: for example, the fight against corruption in Italy; equal remuneration well as the need to increase the density of workers' and employers' organizations in Malta; determination of the minimum wage in Guinea and Bangladesh (the latter also citing widespread poverty, low skills and associated problems); the excessive workload of workers and extreme depopulation in the Cook Islands. Ukraine had to deal with a series of modernization issues (of the welfare state, judiciary, infrastructure etc.), while in the Russian Federation, challenges included the non-payment of salaries, labour relations and labour protection, pensions and working conditions.

Turning to the involvement of ESC-SIs in the management of the potential impacts of the four 'mega-drivers of change' (namely, technological advances, demographic shifts, globalization and climate change), three-quarters of institutions stated that they were involved in the development of, at least, an action plan. The role of the ESC-SIs was mostly advisory (for example, in drafting legislation or developing policies) or sharing of information (including good practices), or both. Fewer institutions (just over half) had an active negotiating role. Some ESC-SIs pointed out additional roles. For example, while the SER in the Netherlands monitored labour market developments, the Guinean ESC had drafted recommendations. The mandate of some recently established institutions, such as the RMG TCC in Bangladesh, in this respect was not yet clear.

The reported outcomes of ESC-SIs involvement were varied, including the establishment of specific working groups, the conduct of national dialogues on the future of work and the organization of national or regional events (such as workshops, conferences or consultations, e.g. in Indonesia). The Economic and Social Council in Luxembourg held consultations on technological changes and set up four working committees to assess the major changes and devise an opinion. In the Russian Federation, a working group on social and labour issues was created to monitor trends in the world of work.

In some countries, the future of work was the object of explicit tripartite consultation. For example, a National Dialogue on the Future of Work was organized in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia in 2017, focusing primarily on the possible impact of technological changes on the economy, and on employment relations, non-standard forms of employment and precarious work. Similarly, in Montenegro, a conference on the future of work had focused on global and national issues, such as the new Labour Law and youth unemployment. The High Council on Labour in Costa Rica participated in a regional dialogue forum on informality and in workshops on labour migration.

Around half of the ESC-SIs had signed a tripartite agreement on some aspect of the future of work: for example, in the Dominican Republic, the Social Pact on Educational Reform put in place mechanisms to ensure that technical and professional education match the national development agenda.

A third of institutions reported the development of a common strategy at the national level. For example, Belgium had pursued a multi-tier strategy. Within the framework of the Inter-professional Agreement of 2017-18, the social partners were examining measures to ensure that digitization leads to more growth, employment, entrepreneurship and sustainable social protection; a multi-stakeholder seminar was scheduled to examine new forms of work organization; and several reports and opinions were published and collective agreements concluded with regards to improved work-life balance.

However, it should be noted that the simple existence of an action plan did not necessarily imply that all aspects of the future of work were being considered. For example, the Social and Economic Council in Serbia had dealt with demography and globalization issues, but had focused much less on technological advances and climate change.

We turn now to consider the involvement of ESC-SIs in respect of each of the four mega-drivers of change in turn.

2.4.1 Technology

The ESC-SIs' involvement in policy debates or other activities related to technological change seems, to date, very limited. Less than one third of the ESC-SIs had engaged in any research, policy advice, advocacy, capacity building or planning, with only minimal collaboration with other institutions on this issue. Only about one in three institutions had actively engaged in discussions at the regional, national and global level.

Nonetheless, there was evidence that the ESC-SIs were well aware of the challenges that technological advancement may pose for the world of work but that, for the vast majority of them, the topic was new. Many of them were only now starting to consider its implications. For example, the Russian Federation's Civic Chamber as well as the Romanian and Guinean Economic and Social Councils were still at the definitional phase, while the Social Council of Montenegro and the Occupied Palestinian Territories' ESC argued that new technologies were not yet having any significant impact on their economy. Some other institutions had made more progress. The OKE in Greece was formulating an opinion on changing labour relations, while the French CESE was preparing a study on the impact of technological change on work. Similarly, the CES in Luxembourg was revising an opinion on 'The Luxembourg economic, social and societal model in technological change'.

ESC-SIs in Malta, Morocco, the Netherlands and Singapore had progressed beyond the definitional phase. In Malta, the Council for Economic and Social Development had debated the impact of AirBnB on tourism, and in Morocco, the CESE included a section on 'Digital transformation at the heart of the services to the citizen and for a strong economic development' in its 2016 annual report. The SER in the Netherlands had tackled the issue of technological advancement within a project on the effects of ICT/robotics on the labour market.²⁴ In Singapore, a comprehensive strategy to monitor the platform economy was being implemented (see Box 4).

Box 4: Monitoring the platform economy in Singapore

In order to build a better understanding of the gig economy, the Government of Singapore has supplemented its annual labour force survey with a specific survey on freelancers. The survey contributes to the understanding of the particular issues and challenges faced by freelancers, which are different than those faced by workers in regular employment relationships. Singapore has also formed a Tripartite Workgroup to devise workable proposals to improve the well-being of the freelance workforce. The Government and social partners are moreover developing a Tripartite Standard on the procurement of services of freelancers, so as to better protect their interests.

²⁴ <http://www.ser.nl/en/publications/publications/2016/people-technology.aspx>

2.4.2 Demography

Compared to the other mega-drivers, ESC-SIs were relatively active in facing the demographic challenge, perhaps due to the fact that population ageing is a longer-term trend. In developing economies with a young population, the employability of older workers is considered less pressing than finding new professional and vocational avenues for young workers. By contrast, in the ageing societies of industrialized nations, adapting labour markets and social protection systems to meet the needs of the elderly is the paramount concern.

Between half and three fifths of ESC-SIs were active or very active regarding the conduct of research, provision of policy advice, consultations at the national, regional and global levels or collaboration with other institutions on issues related to demographic change. Some good practices were evident. For example, members of the Economic and Social Council in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia underwent thematic training and the ESC launched a research fund to improve collaboration with academia, including for research on creating a sustainable and effective pension system and on the promotion of social dialogue. Similarly, the CNEL in Italy established close ties with the Italian National Institute of Statistics to conduct a survey on the impact of demographic change on labour markets, as was also the case in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, whose ESC cooperated with the National Statistics Bureau. In Belgium, the CNT helped to broker the Inter-Professional Agreement for 2017-18, which regulates early and partial retirement, as well as collective agreements dealing with the employability of older workers, and was actively promoting youth employment.

Only around one third of ESC-SIs were providing capacity building or developing an action plan, while a few more were carrying out awareness raising related to demographic shifts. There were some notable exceptions, however: several ESC-SIs were preparing strategy papers. In France, the CESE was involved in the design of a series of strategies, including on social investment, the adaptation of society to ageing and the labour market insertion of youth. The MCESD in Malta established working groups to offer guidance on these topics. The OKE in Greece was working on an opinion on the changing nature of labour relations and the challenges of creating and maintaining quality employment. The Ministry of Manpower in Indonesia was collaborating with other Ministries on vocational education. In Luxembourg, the annual opinion of the Economic and Social Council (under the European Semester policy cycle) gave the social partners the opportunity to present their views on demographic change. Finally, Singapore developed a comprehensive strategy to enhance employment opportunities and the quality of employment for older and female workers. It was due to launch the Tripartite Standard on Flexible Work Arrangements, including best practices to allow workers to balance their work and family responsibilities.

2.4.3 Climate change

In the relatively new area of climate change, the engagement of ECS-SIs is still very low. Most ESC-SIs had taken little or no action on this issue, although some had planned to start addressing environment-related issues soon (e.g. Tunisia, once it becomes operational, Occupied Palestinian Territories). More than half of the ESC-SIs did not have an action plan in place, very few had provided policy advice, engaged in awareness raising or capacity building, and only one third had conducted more than occasional research).

There were nonetheless some examples of good practice. The Social Council in Montenegro and the CESE in Morocco had conducted studies on the green economy and green jobs. The ESC-SIs in Belgium, France and Luxembourg had included green jobs in their recommendations. For example, the Belgian National Labour Council, in collaboration with the Central Economic Council, published consecutive recommendations in 2009 and 2010 on a smooth transition to a low-emission economy and on the state of green jobs.

Around 40-45% of ESC-SIs had engaged in talks at national and supranational levels and collaborated with other institutions. The CESE of Côte d'Ivoire established a 'clean-up' working group, in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and Sustainable Development. In Luxembourg, the CES had collaborated with the National Office of Statistics on 'recommended indicators' of climate change.

Workshops and conferences were relatively common activities. A workshop on green jobs was organized in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, while the Economic and Social Council of the Republic of Guinea participated in the UN Climate Change Conferences (COP21 in Paris, COP22 in Marrakech) and in seminars with the Union of Francophone Economic and Social Councils and Similar Institutions (UCESIF) and AICESIS.

The SER of the Netherlands reported a comprehensive approach, including the facilitation of an 'Agreement on Energy for Sustainable Growth', which provided the basis for all national energy policies (see Box 5).

Box 5: The Netherlands' approach to the future of energy

On 6 September 2013, after an eight-month negotiation process, 47 Dutch organizations signed the Agreement on Energy for Sustainable Growth.²⁵ The SER facilitated this process. With it, the signatories have laid the basis for a robust, future-proof energy and climate policy enjoying broad support. They include central, regional and local government, employers' associations and unions, nature conservation and environmental organizations, and other civil-society organizations and financial institutions. The Agreement's core feature is a set of broadly supported provisions regarding energy saving, clean technology, and climate policy. Implementing these provisions is intended to result in an affordable and clean energy supply, jobs, and opportunities for the Netherlands in the market for clean technologies. The Energy Agreement consists of 175 concrete measures and sub-agreements that are now being enacted. The SER facilitates their implementation and monitors progress through specific 'meters'.

2.4.4 Globalization

With regards to globalization – in terms of its impact on labour mobility, productivity and work-life balance – most ESC-SIs were relatively engaged.

The vast majority of ESC-SIs were communicating and consulting on these issues: collaboration with other institutions was high, and discussions at the regional, national and global levels were relatively common. More than two thirds had issued policy advice or conducted awareness raising. However, few had engaged in capacity building activities, the development of an action plan or research.

One highly relevant initiative was the international responsible business conduct (I-RBC) initiative, launched by the SER of the Netherlands in 2008 (see Box 6).

²⁵ <http://www.energieakkoordser.nl/doen/engels.aspx>

Box 6: The SER approach to the responsible management of GSCs

During the implementation of the I-RBC initiative in 2013-2015, the SER focussed on due diligence, which resulted in the drafting of a report, designing a practical module and a code of practice with the Netherlands Standardization Institute (NEN), all aimed at integrating due diligence into existing (risk) management systems. Moreover, the SER organized a conference and offered a workshop for companies, including to SMEs and MNEs, on how to identify and address human rights risks, in line with the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises and the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights. In 2015, with broad political support, including from the Dutch Government, the SER promoted the conclusion of I-RBC agreements at the sectoral level. The agreements have two main goals: i) to improve the conditions of groups affected by specific risks (e.g. child labour, low pay, human rights violations or environmental pollution) within three to five years after conclusion of an agreement; ii) to offer collective solutions to problems that firms are unable to solve by themselves, through collaboration with trade unions, NGOs and Government. Such voluntary agreements have already been concluded in several sectors, for example, in textiles, banking, insurance, etc. ²⁶

²⁶ http://www.internationalrbc.org/methods?sc_lang=en

III. Main constraints on the operations of ESC-SIs

In the aftermath of the economic and financial crisis, almost two-thirds of ESC-SIs acknowledged that social dialogue had been challenged in some way in recent years.

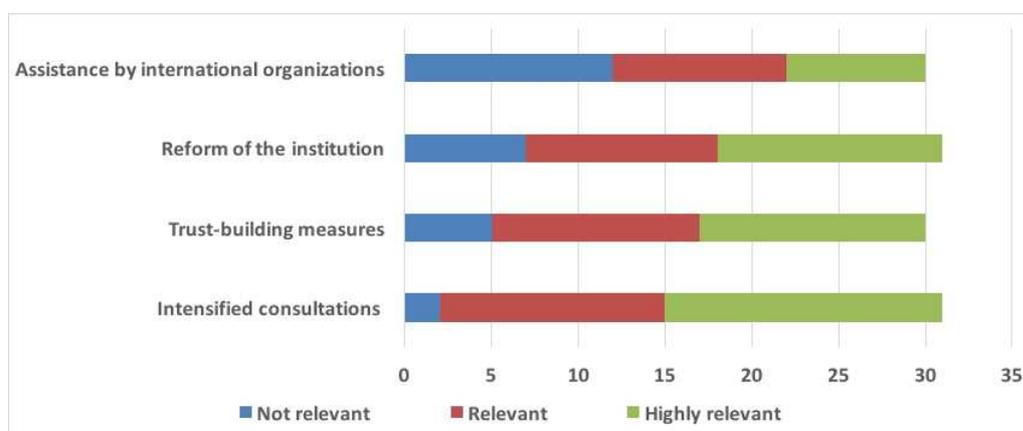
According to the vast majority of them, there was a perception that social dialogue did not go far or quickly enough, especially during times of crisis or in the face of rapidly changing circumstances. For example, in Greece, the OKE continued issuing opinions on most socioeconomic matters; although these were by no means entirely disregarded, in several cases the Parliament, under external pressure, adopted draft laws without paying due attention to these opinions. In Belgium, the decision-making tempo of social dialogue was often deemed too slow to meet the government's requirements; if, as a result, the fruits of hard negotiations were disregarded, this undermined trust among the negotiators.

Reduced levels of mutual trust and lack of political will or government support were singled out as the major causes of the disruption of social dialogue. Political turmoil negatively affected the effectiveness, impact and regularity of ESC-SI meetings (the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia), and low government commitment rendered social dialogue fragile (Cook Islands). The ESC of Guinea pointed to the fact that changes at Ministerial level tended to hamper social dialogue.

Trust between the tripartite actors was identified as a challenge by around three fifths of ESC-SIs. In the Netherlands, the SER noted that internal disagreements within the trade unions and employers' organizations rendered cooperation difficult at times. Lack of trust was exacerbated by the absence of political will to fully sustain social dialogue (Republika Srpska (BiH)) or where there was profound disagreement between the social partners on specific issues e.g. on fiscal policy after 2008 in Luxembourg.

Figure 5 presents the actions undertaken to address these challenges. It shows that intensified consultations and trust-building measures promoted by government were the most prevalent measures. A significant number of institutions were also undergoing internal reforms. Requesting assistance from international organizations, such as the ILO or AICESIS, was the least common action. Nonetheless, the RMG TCC of Bangladesh and the ESC in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia acknowledged helpful technical and strategic support from ILO projects, in several aspects of social dialogue and industrial relations.

Figure 5. Actions undertaken to address challenges to social dialogue

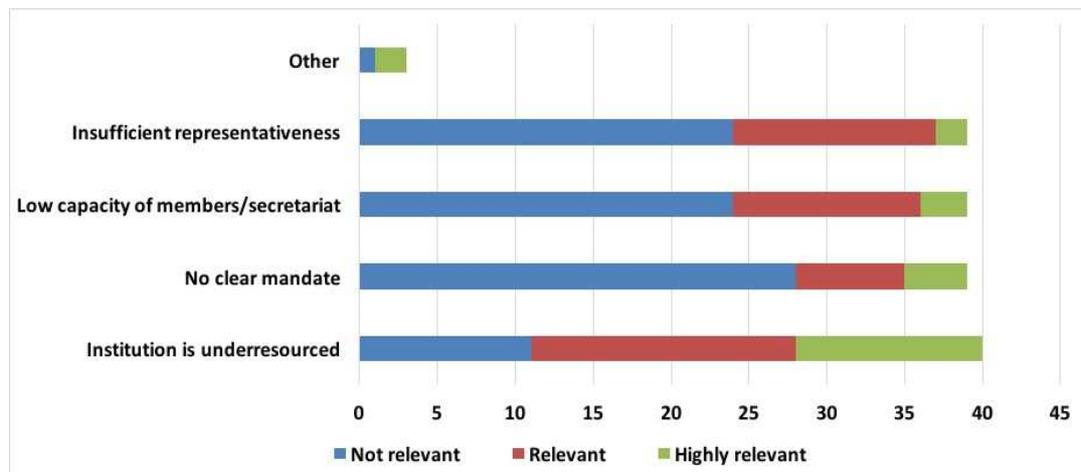


The ESC-SIs that had undertaken internal reforms did so in various domains: e.g. in their operational rules (a rotating Presidency among the three constituents in the Social Council in Montenegro) or status (the ESC-SI to be inserted into the Constitution in the Ukraine), or were simply subject to major restructuring (in Italy and Jordan). The CES of Luxembourg was updating its mission, methods of work and tasks in line with successive agreements and its multi-year programme of work. The CNT in Belgium, despite the transfer of some competences of inter-professional social dialogue to the federal government, had nonetheless strengthened its coordination role between different administrative levels.

Some challenges related to internal constraints faced by ESC-SIs. As shown in Figure 6, most ESC-SIs considered their institution to be under-resourced, whether understaffed and/or underfunded. Several institutions gave further details. ESCs in both the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Guinea indicated that financial resources were outside their control (as they were fixed within the national budget) and insufficient to support the conduct of research, hiring of experts and so on. In the Occupied Palestinian Territories' ESC, budgetary restrictions meant that most of the work was done on a voluntary basis.

The Belgian CNT reported that lack of staff was hindering its capacity to make full use of complex technical material (often produced by external consultants), for example, in the context of inter-professional negotiations; while in Ukraine, the ESC-SI stated that staff shortages had hampered training activities for the members of the National Council for Social Dialogue. Finally, Malta's MCESD was undergoing restructuring, including the engagement of key personnel, and investment in research and new premises, in order to overcome its internal constraints.

Figure 6. Internal challenges to ESC-SIs



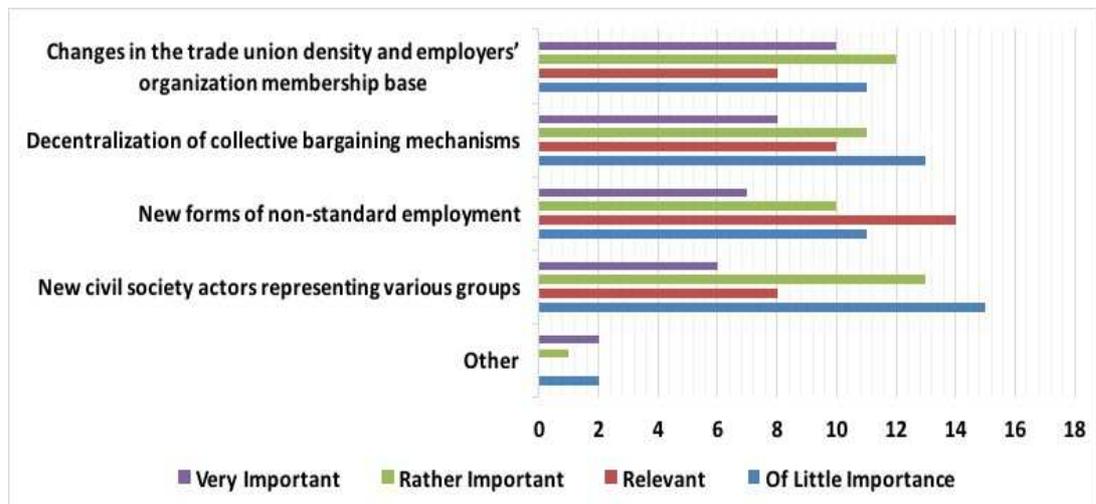
Only a small minority of ESC-SIs considered that insufficient representation of various groups, such as youth, migrant workers, workers with a disability or the self-employed, or low capacity of their members or secretariat were 'highly relevant' challenges. Around a quarter of ESC-SIs perceived their lack of a clear mandate as an obstacle: for example, in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, it seems that a poorly-defined legal and institutional framework was responsible for a lack of development of tripartite-plus dialogue within the ESC.

Regarding the external factors shaping social dialogue at national level (see Figure 7), many ESC-SIs pointed out that changes in union density and membership of employers' organizations, as well as the decentralization of collective bargaining, were particularly worrying. Yet some ESC-SIs, such as the Belgian CNT, expressed some ambiguity. It explained that the decentralization of collective bargaining entailed both advantages and

disadvantages; on the one hand, it allowed a better understanding of the real situation at the enterprise level but, on the other hand, it might undermine the coherence of measures adopted across different sectors or industries.

Lower priority was accorded to the emergence of new civil society actors representing various groups or interests (such as youth, women, the environment etc.) or to the proliferation of new forms of non-standard employment e.g. on-demand work.

Figure 7. Transformational changes affecting national social dialogue



The survey results appear to show that greater importance was accorded by ESC-SIs to well-established problems (such as demographic change and globalization) than to the newer phenomena which figure prominently in the Future of Work agenda (such as crowdwork and the emergence of new civil society stakeholders). Two implications may be drawn. First, some ESC-SIs appear to be struggling to grasp the new challenges presented by the future of work, and to formulate a strategy to address them. Second, the fact that ESC-SIs are still reflecting and taking action on the 'older' problems indicates that, despite having been on the agenda for many years, these challenges persist to this day.

Industrialized economies seem to be more affected by new forms of employment than developing economies. The ESC-SIs of both Belgium and Malta pointed out that, even if the issue was still quite marginal and barely on their agenda, they feared that it might undermine conditions of work and the correct functioning of social dialogue in the future. In developing economies, such as Guinea, the ESC was concerned that certain foreign investments were at the root of deregulation of the labour market.

ESC-SIs offered divergent views on the issue of new civil society actors. On the one hand, the Italian CNEL felt that a system to measure and certify the representativeness of the social partners and of new actors was needed. By contrast, the CNT in Belgium and the SER in the Netherlands stated that civil society actors were either already participating in social dialogue or were included within the ranks of highly representative social partners. The SER elaborated further on the growing complexity of the policymaking environment. Rather than being the pre-eminent decision-maker as in the past, government was now just one of many concerned stakeholders. Such a shift demanded a networked approach to law-making and implementation by different government ministries and the social partners, making use of social pacting as necessary.

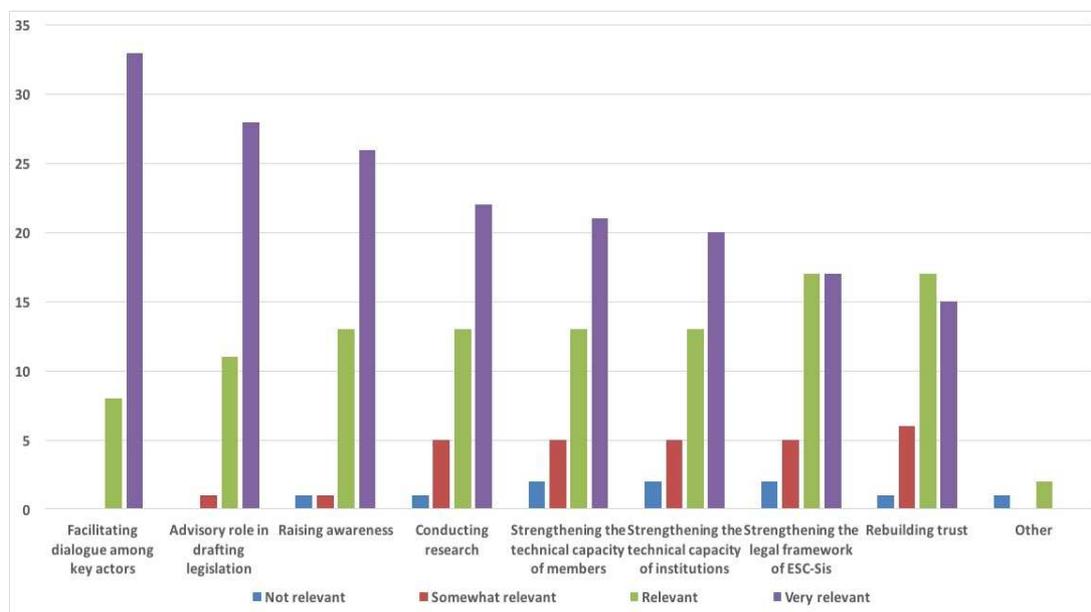
IV. Paths to the stronger engagement of ESC-SIs in future of work challenges

ESC-SIs were asked to consider how social dialogue might be improved in the future, including their own role and that of the social partners, in order to better confront the evolving context of the world of work.

The most favoured solutions to improve social dialogue were by finding new forms of collaboration and establishing new strategic partnerships, as well as by increasing the technical capacity, knowledge and expertise of social dialogue actors (both labour administration and the social partners). Much lower priority was given to increasing the membership of workers' and employers' organizations (a problem felt particularly in Bangladesh, where only 4% of the 4 million RMG workers were unionized, and in Italy), and to reaching out to the unorganized, precarious and vulnerable groups.

Regarding the future role of ESC-SIs in strengthening social dialogue, renewing the social contract and shaping the future of work, the responses given did not always match the preferred solutions noted above (see Figure 8).

Figure 8. ESC-SI's role in strengthening social dialogue



Overall, ESC-SIs gave high priority to their facilitation of dialogue among government, employers' and workers' organizations and other key actors in the world of work; to reinforcing their advisory role in drafting legislation and developing policies; and to broadening the appeal of social dialogue by raising awareness of the new challenges e.g. through campaigns. The Occupied Palestinian Territories' ESC, for example, endeavoured to collaborate with partners such as the Arab League for Social and Economic Councils. Several other aspects of the role of ESC-SIs were given rather less attention: namely, research; strengthening the technical capacity of the institutions and their members; rebuilding trust; and reforming the legal framework.

Some differences emerged between those countries enjoying a long tradition of effective, institutionalized social dialogue and those with no such tradition. By way of illustration, the ESC-SIs in the Benelux countries shared a similar vision of their future role. They were not particularly concerned by problems of representativeness (in Luxembourg

and the Netherlands), legal framework and mandate (in Belgium, Luxemburg and in the Netherlands) or lack of awareness (the SER in the Netherlands suggested that public consultations conducted via the internet or by using simplified public versions of its reports were far more effective tools than more traditional awareness campaigns). The institutions in all three countries posited that the most crucial success factors were: the way their members interacted to find efficient policy solutions; the provision of timely and solid technical expertise; and ensuring effective cooperation between the different levels of consultation (inter-professional, sectoral and company) and of government (e.g. in Belgium, between federal, regional and community levels).

4.1 Priority internal changes needed

The ESC-SIs offered a wide range of proposals regarding possible actions to assure their continued relevance in the evolving world of work. These can be grouped into the following main areas of action:

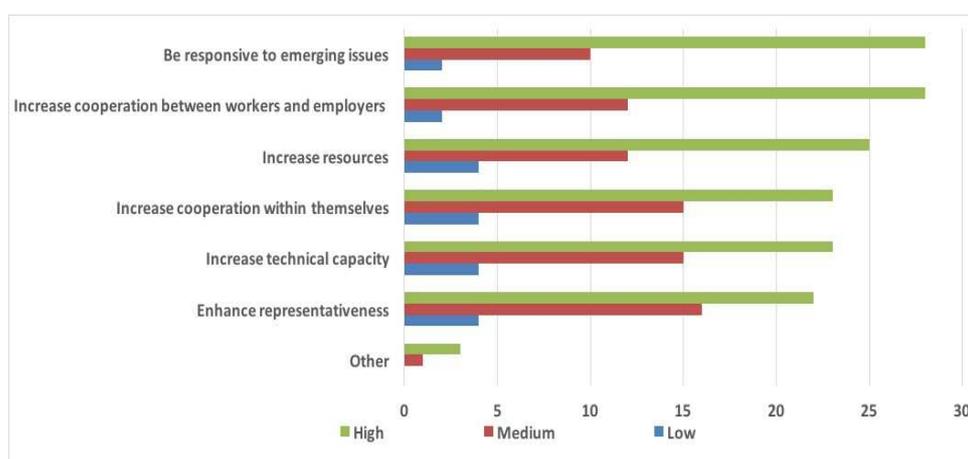
- *Reviewing the status, mission and business process:* Both the Italian CNEL and the Korean Economic and Social Development Commission (ESDC) envisaged a more focused role. The former wished to introduce mandatory consultation and an improved contribution of the CNEL to the legislative process. The ESDC envisaged concluding specific social agreements to respond to diverse issues that might arise in the future. The members of the tripartite working group wished the newly created CNDS to be fully engaged in the realization of the SDGs.
- *Expanding the representation and membership of the institution:* Several ESC-SIs, in countries as diverse as Jordan, the Republic of Korea, the Netherlands, Republika Srpska (BiH) and Sri Lanka, agreed that including representatives of workers who are not currently members of trade unions (especially those in non-standard forms of employment) as well as of other stakeholders was key.
- *Organizational change and/or the establishment of a new structure:* Given the rapid changes in the world of work, the Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation as well as the Guinean ESC were planning to create new units (a Commission and an Observatory, respectively) to monitor labour market and related trends.
- *Legal reforms:* These were needed to respond to a change of jurisdiction or functions that had occurred (Spain, Republika Srpska (BiH) and in Vanuatu, which wanted the legal framework to be aligned with the SDGs); or to changes in the representativeness of members or institutional mandate (e.g. from an advisory to decision-making role in Ukraine); or to the insertion of the ESC-SI in the national constitution (Burundi).
- *Coordination and collaboration:* This was an important issue for the OKE in Greece, which exhorted its members towards greater collaboration and responsibility, as well as in Ukraine, which perceived a need for greater cooperation with the territorial tripartite ESC-SIs.
- *Strengthening technical capacities to formulate advice, and contribute to drafting legislation and policies:* Countries and territories as diverse as Algeria, the Dominican Republic, Côte d'Ivoire and Republika Srpska (BiH) stated that enhanced technical capacity was needed to better tailor solutions to policy problems.
- *Strengthening institutional effectiveness, strategic planning and change management:* Several of the younger institutions were working to develop their organizational capacity, including the RMG TCC in Bangladesh, the ESC in the Dominican Republic, the Labour Ministry in Grenada, the Social Dialogue Council in Poland and the ESC in Republika

Srpska (BiH). As pointed out by the SER in the Netherlands, however, organizational changes needed to be continuous, responding to the evolving socioeconomic context.

- *Advocacy and communication strategy*: Both the Cook Islands National Tripartite Labour Advisory Council and the ESC of Republika Srpska (BiH) were concerned with awareness raising on the role of social dialogue.
- *Facilitating and organizing discussions, fora, meetings, etc.*: The Higher Labour Council in Chile, the Luxembourg CES as well as the Economic and Social Development Commission of the Republic of Korea were all interested in organizing conferences on topical themes, including those related to the future of work, such as globalization, migration, the gig economy and so on.
- *Studies and research*: The CNT in Belgium focused on new societal challenges, such as the ‘sharing’ economy, new forms of work organization, work-life balance, work-related burnout, youth employment and the reinforcement of social dialogue. The ESC in Luxembourg focused on the promotion of good practices, while the ESC in China argued for more studies on the employment relationship, working conditions, businesses and employment etc.
- *Partnership development*: The ESC of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia mentioned that it welcomed input from NGOs, academia, and international organizations in the context of the evolving world of work. The National Tripartite Forum of Samoa was interested in receiving updates on best practice from other countries. The Indonesian Ministry of Manpower foresaw greater collaboration with industrialized countries.

With regards to the steps that workers’ and employers’ organizations should take in order to increase their role and influence in policymaking, the majority of ESC-SIs considered that all the options listed in the survey instrument were important (see Figure 9). The areas perceived to be most in need of improvement were: responsiveness to emerging issues; cooperation and information-sharing among the social partners; and resource availability (both human and financial).

Figure 9. Steps by workers' and employers' organizations to enhance their role in policy-making



In countries with a long tradition of social dialogue (e.g. in Benelux countries), the situation was assessed as satisfactory. The participation and influence of workers’ and employers’ organizations was deemed already quite good, given their high capacity across most areas. Nonetheless, the SER in the Netherlands still argued in favour of improving their representativeness, especially by attracting younger workers. The CNT in Belgium called for more information sharing and responsiveness, for example, through establishing shared databases, and the Luxembourg CES noted that, despite generally good communication

between workers and employers, their views on certain topics were so divergent that no compromise proved possible.

Other countries were actively working towards improving the participation of workers' and employers' organizations, for example, Romania (see Box 7).

Box 7: The restructuring of the ESC in Romania

According to the Romanian Constitution, the ESC has been, since 2013, an autonomous bipartite plus public institution of national interest, whose mandate is to conduct national social dialogue between employers, trade unions and civil society representatives. Its consultation is mandatory on draft legislative acts initiated by the Government and on legislative proposals made by deputies or senators (members of Government hence have observer status). The law has only been effectively implemented since 2017. Similarly, the 45 members of the ESC Plenum (15 representatives for each party) were validated in January 2017. The reorganization of the institution is, however, not yet complete. Several meetings with the social partners have taken place to consider amendments to the Social Dialogue Law of 2011. The active participation of the ESC in the redrafting of this law is considered indispensable.

The Bangladesh RMG TCC, as a newly established institution, was constrained by its lack of material, technical and human resources. Similarly, the Guinean CES felt that its members lacked the necessary training and knowledge, while the Labour Ministry of Grenada and the Occupied Palestinian Territories' ESC also indicated that their lack of resources was hindering their working and lobbying capacity. The Tunisian General Labour Union (UGTT) called for greater representation of workers in the private sector and for the establishment of a workers' academy to train union cadres.

4.2 Support needed from AICESIS and the ILO

The AICESIS members were generally satisfied with the support they received and made no requests for additional services. They particularly valued the facilitation by AICESIS of exchanges of information, experiences and good practices; the organization of capacity building and training workshops at the regional level; and the sharing of documents and reports related to the future of work.

Expectations from the ILO for assistance in promoting social dialogue were less well articulated, yet very few ESC-SIs assigned low importance to any of the services offered by the ILO. ILO's main delivery mechanism is Decent Work Country Programmes. In order to achieve the ILO's four strategic objectives, i.e. the fundamental principles and rights at work, decent employment for all, social protection, and social dialogue and tripartism, the ILO provides services to its constituents primarily through: the dissemination of evidence-based research and sharing of good practices; capacity building and training; policy advice on specific policy issues; and the promotion of International Labour Standards.

A number of important proposals were made by the ESC-SIs. For example, the Guinean CES suggested the preparation of a comprehensive comparative study of social dialogue practices around the world. The Higher Labour Council of Chile pointed out that performance indicators were required to measure the impact of social dialogue on the ground.

Despite the overall positive evaluations of support from AICESIS and the ILO, the survey also showed that countries did not often seek the assistance of international organizations, including AICESIS, when social dialogue was challenged at home. AICESIS constitutes an ideal forum for the exchange of experiences and good practices between its diverse members, as well as for the delivery of capacity building and other support.

V. Conclusions

The joint ILO-AICESIS Conference 2017 takes place in the context of one of the ILO's Centenary initiatives – the Future of Work initiative. The initiative is encouraging reflection among the ILO's tripartite constituents – governments, employers and workers – on the transformational changes underway in today's world of work, and what they will mean for the economies and societies of tomorrow. Consideration of the role of social dialogue constitutes a central part of these reflections. In essence, what contribution can and should social dialogue make to ensure good governance of the changing world of work, social justice and achievement by the global community of the Sustainable Development Goals?

This background report first set out the key issues and challenges related to the future of work, including the key drivers shaping it, as identified by the ILO – technological advances, demographic shifts, climate change, and accelerating globalization. It examined the role of social dialogue in relation to each of these drivers. The report went on to analyse the results of an ILO-AICESIS survey of 44 national Economic and Social Councils and Similar Institutions (ESC-SIs).

The survey provides insights into how ESC-SIs around the world perceive and are responding to the numerous challenges and opportunities presented by the rapid transformation of the world of work. In this concluding section, we first summarize several key trends or patterns that can be discerned. We then suggest a number of provisional policy recommendations for further discussion at the Athens conference.

Overall, the survey findings showed a wide variety of perceptions, priorities and activities of ESC-SIs across different regions and countries. All the ESC-SIs demonstrated awareness of some – if not all – of the future of work challenges their countries were facing but they displayed varying degrees of readiness and capacity to tackle them.

A number of important differences emerged between countries and between issues.

First, ESC-SIs in high-income, industrialized economies tended to assign greater importance to future of work-related issues e.g. the impact of technological advances on the world of work, than those in low- and middle-income countries.

Second, the top policy priorities identified by ESC-SIs did not necessarily coincide with the key issues highlighted under the Future of Work initiative. Indeed, given the limited resources (financial, technical and human) available to most ESC-SIs, it was not possible for them to try to address such a wide array of topics. Rather, ESC-SIs tended to prioritize the problems that were most immediately pressing in their current national contexts and with which they were already familiar: for example, high unemployment, occupational safety and health risks, workplace compliance, social security reforms or social peace.

Third, regarding the four mega-drivers of change, greater priority was often accorded to the older problems as opposed to the newer phenomena in the Future of Work agenda. Hence, the challenges associated with demographic change and globalization, both long-established tendencies, were given more importance than those related to climate change or technological advances. Similarly, ESC-SIs overall were only moderately concerned by 'new' issues such as the emergence of non-standard forms of employment or new civil society stakeholder groups.

Fourth, differences emerged between countries depending on whether or not they enjoyed a long history and tradition of social dialogue. Those countries with well-established and well-resourced social dialogue institutions in place had greater capacity to address future of work challenges than those which did not. Despite the fact that some two thirds of the surveyed ESC-SIs possessed a strategic plan to strengthen social dialogue, and the majority

were aware that future of work issues should be on their agenda, it appeared that few institutions (with some notable exceptions) have as yet been able to invest sufficient resources in understanding and addressing these new challenges. Such an investment is critical if ESC-SIs are to reconfirm their value, particularly by being able to pre-empt serious labour market and employment problems before they arise.

Finally, survey responses revealed that national social dialogue institutions had generally been tested during the financial crisis and the subsequent recession. Many had undertaken reforms and other measures to seek to rebuild and consolidate their role; this had clearly placed heavy demands on the institutions, some of which are still struggling to recover fully from this difficult period. Conversely, institutions in some other countries (albeit a minority) had emerged stronger from the crisis. Some policymakers perceived that social dialogue did not go far or quickly enough, especially when faced with the crisis or other rapidly changing circumstances. This points to a need to strengthen the strategic planning capacity of ESC-SIs so that they may cope better with future such contingencies.

The Future of Work initiative exists precisely because the challenges posed by the changing world of work are not only here to stay, but seem likely to intensify in the near future. The following constitute some provisional policy recommendations arising from the survey findings, in order that ESC-SIs may better position themselves in the debates around these issues.

- ESC-SIs need to strengthen their strategic planning capacity and devise realistic, costed and time-bound programmes to deal with the priority future of work-related challenges emerging in each national context;
- ESC-SIs may adopt a more proactive role, bringing together government, employers' and workers' representatives, as well as other actors of the world of work where appropriate to discuss future of work-related challenges and opportunities. They may enhance partnerships with expert institutions and academia in order to strengthen their technical capacity and knowledge on the most critical issues;
- ESCI-SIs might also set up working groups or sub-committees to examine specific future of work issues in greater depth, for example, in relation to upskilling and new vocational training mechanisms that are needed for the myriad new categories of work that are being generated through globalization, technological and climate change (e.g. home-based crowd workers, 'green' technological skills, ITC skills and so on);
- there is a need for heightened public awareness about the importance of renewing the social contract around shared social and economic goals. Options to consider include the organization of public hearings or the commissioning of studies, accompanied by a sound communications strategy;
- ESC-SIs would benefit from increased sharing of experiences and good practices across countries and regions. Such exchanges could help those ESC-SIs that are only now starting to think about the future of work to learn from others for whom these issues have been on the agenda for some time already. A focus is needed as much on the opportunities afforded by the transformation of the world of work as on the challenges that it presents; indeed, these are two sides of the same coin;
- AICESIS, in collaboration with the ILO, may serve as facilitator for some of the above activities. Their long experience can be mobilized to facilitate communication among ESC-SIs, the cross-fertilization of new policy ideas and approaches, and the exchange of experience and good practice.

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