



'The future of work and mental health' ***Ensuring quality employment in an ever-changing context***

9 October 2019, 14:00 – 17:30

Avenue Marnix 17 (TBC)
1000 Brussels
Belgium

Setting the context

New technologies and the digital age are driving forces in the way we work and the way we understand work. Globalisation and demographic changes are also playing a pivotal role in reshaping the working structures - how, where, how much and when we work.

With appropriate preparation, employee participation and regulations, the introduction of new technologies can lead to better safety measures and more productivity. Digitalisation might allow for more flexibility to combine work with other activities contributing to work-life balance, while providing access to the labour market for people that might otherwise be excluded (i.e. people needing jobs with flexible working hours). However, there are challenges on the way. According to [an analysis](#) by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) an increasing number of jobs will soon be performed by machines and likely undergo significant changes on how they are carried out. Digitalisation and changes in the world of work are leading to the rise of non-standard forms of employment, which might not necessarily mean access to quality employment. Job insecurity, fluctuation of income, lack of work structures, eligibility to access health and social protection are just some of the aspects to consider when looking at the ongoing changes in work and employment.

These trends can have a negative impact on the well-being and mental health of workers and also further raise inequalities in society when it comes to access to employment. Workers in vulnerable situations, such as people with psychosocial disabilities, can easily end up being left behind and exit or have difficulties entering the labour market. In the insufficiently unregulated labour market which the changing future of work could bring, new jobs may come with lower social protection coverage, poorer access to training opportunities and fewer possibilities for career progression than traditional open-ended jobs. A [joint OECD-European Commission report](#) found that costs of mental ill-health to the labour market (lower employment and lower productivity) annually amount to EUR 240 billion across all Member States of the European Union (EU), namely 1.6% of their GDP. However, when it comes to

prioritisation both in terms of political and financial agendas, the topic remains poorly addressed.

It does not have to be that way. If well-understood, timely tackled and underpinned by adequate policies and legislation, changes in the world of work can be beneficial for all. Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) measures could be adapted to adequately address the physical and mental needs of workers as a form of prevention. Policies and commitments could focus on individuals to provide support in remaining and/or (re)entering employment, which could prove particularly beneficial for people in vulnerable situations, including people with psychosocial disabilities.

What is the seminar's purpose and who is it for?

It is against this backdrop that the [European Alliance for Mental Health – Employment & Work](#) is organising a seminar on 9th October. The seminar will have the purpose to discuss the consequences that these changes might cause to mental health and well-being, as well as what can be done to adequately address them.

Efficient preventive measures, positive actions to keep people in employment and meaningful support to (re)enter the labour market: could this model be a solution to successfully face upcoming challenges?

The seminar will be relevant for EU and (sub-)national policy-makers, businesses, social partners, civil society and advocacy organisations, as well as academia, to exchange and learn from each other. We expect around 60-80 attendees from a variety of sectors (health, employment and human resources, education, social inclusion and social protection).

Draft agenda

14:00 – 14:30	Welcome and introduction
14:30 – 14:45	Setting the scene: what are the current changes in the world of work and what do they tell us about the future and mental health challenges?
14:45 – 15:00	From the ground: personal testimony of a person with lived experience of mental ill-health
15:00 – 15:15	Looking forward: The future of work and its impact on the well-being of younger generations
15:15 – 15:35	Q&A
15:35 – 16:00	Coffee break
16:00 – 17:00	Panel discussion: what should be done to ensure well-being at work?
17:00 – 17:30	Conclusions