

Why a changed working life requires basic income

Vivan Storlund

The Covid-19 pandemic should be a wake-up call to finally give due attention to the injustice persons working in so-called atypical work formats face. Before the oil crisis of the 1970s' atypical work' averaged a few per cent in OECD countries. Today we talk about plus-minus 25 per cent. How should labour and social security legislation be redesigned to accord legal protection for 'atypical work'.

It is conceptual confusion to talk about work as atypical when roughly one-quarter of the working population perform work so termed, and its decrease is not in sight. It is not sustainable to continue calling work that deviates from the premise of full-time long-term employment atypical when the effect is that a growing number of persons are deprived of the protection labour law is intended to offer. This question involves international labour standards and human rights. Equally, it raises questions of fundamental prerequisites of a legal order, such as predictability, legal certainty, equality before the law, etcetera.

The profound changes working life is going through requires new ways of perceiving work; how meaningful and sustainable it is, and how it contributes to or extracts from the common good. In the economic sphere, promising advances are made to move beyond GDP also to measure social progress. A corresponding rethinking is required in labour law.

Unconditional basic income should be a first step to remedy the injustice caused by the labour law premises. UBI will give leeway for artistic work and work in civil society, reflecting people's plans of life, interests, needs and care for others.

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