



Marcel GRIGNARD: The trade unions' point of view

I stopped being a union official last year but, as the Chairman of a small association with 10 employees, I can see every day how hard it is to change organisations and behaviours. For several years, we have been facing major changes that will most likely impact people.

I would like to talk about some European countries, for instance the UK, Germany and Austria where, between 2008 and 2014, the number of jobs created was higher than the evolution of GDP, which proves that it is possible to foster employment in the absence of growth. For instance, in Germany, the average employee's working time was cut by 0.7% per annum. In the UK, two thirds of new jobs created are self-employed and their salary is 27% lower than the average wage. This is interesting as we are in a sort of dynamic between structural reform, macro-economic policy and the way businesses struggle in this world. We're in this situation because State and social regulations are obsolete and not in keeping with the changes that need to be made. Yet, when these regulation modes don't work, the market rule establishes itself; this doesn't only mean that rules are imposed, some rules are also meant to protect. At State level, the European Union doesn't have real political governance and the decisions made feel more like bargaining for national interests. Then, at the level of social players, the main problem is that they are criticising businesses' increasingly horizontal organisation whereas social systems are built on vertical organisation. Remember that most of our regulation modes were defined after World War Two, in 1948, on the basis of the monolithic industrial manufacturing company. Matching these regulation modes and businesses is complicated.

The solution would be for those in charge of governance to make an effort and change the systems to go along the radical changes we are facing. Sadly, it would be quite optimistic to think that unions are going to work on this problem soon. Actually, I don't think politicians can do it either. When you analyse the democratic political representation crisis in our developed countries, you can see that democratic systems are suffering but without knowing what will come out tomorrow. From then on, the solution isn't to patch up the systems but to innovate. The question now is: what are we going to do in businesses as they are the only rare places where innovation is possible? Besides, the pressure of survival is shared by all and produces more enthusiasm than electoral pressure. I have always been convinced that social dialogue is the true voice to carry this question of social innovation, with two keywords: trust and responsibility. The key stake is to free thinking areas in order to innovate and assess innovations. I believe the subject of quality at work is important (the possibility of leaving work if one's children are sick without asking permission for instance). Once, I spoke with an HR manager in the military who told me that he offered his sailors coming back from Afghanistan the possibility of organising their working time as they pleased during the 6 weeks they spent docked as long as the boat was ready to leave. And it was.

Finally, another major stake would be indicators. The OECD has done a lot of work on quality development criteria and set up a series of indicators that were then implemented throughout the OECD's regions. One can now get data on the quality of life in each of these regions and every company can see where it stands compared with the indicators of the country where it is located. We could draw inspiration from this and create a form of open dialogue with other



local stakeholders whose goal would be to see if there is a link between the economic activity and a company's activity and the region's citizens based on a new development mode encouraging quality.

Since the current evolutions are both full of opportunities and full of risks, the idea is to drive them towards opportunities, as much as possible, knowing that we will have to manage the risks. Yet, one of the biggest risks would be if the current changes didn't bring social relations towards a vision of cooperation but towards one of conflict.