

STANDARD WORK: AN ANACHRONISM?

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FOREWORD

The standardized employment contract: foundation of decent work

During the development of quite some national systems of labour law, the regulator used the open-ended employment contract for a full-time position as reference. This contract offers employees the best possible protection, the best guarantee for job and socio-economic security and an almost automatic affiliation to social security and collective consultation schemes. The open-ended employment contract creates a situation in which employees have a steady job and income. It thus makes a fundamental contribution to the consolidation of the social fabric. Often, stable labour relations are also the foundation of stable and high-quality social relations. Thereby, the open-ended employment contract became the mainstay of respect for human dignity at work and elsewhere. The dominance of the free market economy and the corresponding ideology has long been endorsed by the liberalization of the labour market, which is closely related to its internationalization as well. Because pressure on the nationally developed social correction mechanisms is increased, labour relations are becoming increasingly flexible. As a direct consequence, standardized pay and working conditions are eroded. Precarious employment contracts and precarious types of work are thriving. The reference function of the open-ended employment contract seems to be at risk. The dignity of men at work is jeopardized.

With this “European observatory on standard work”, which was motivated by the concern for a high-quality work environment and society, the Research Unit Social Competition and Law has created an instrument to monitor the situation regarding open-ended employment contracts in various EU countries more closely and to understand the underlying processes more thoroughly.

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