

First Cisl at UNI Professionals & Managers Global Conference



The World Conference of UNI Professionals and Managers (UNI P&M) took place in Cape Town last 17-18 April 2024.

A joint session with UNI ICTS (Information, Communications, Technology) opened the conference and the first panel, significantly, was dedicated to the impact of new technologies on the world of work, with specific reference to the category of middle managers, executives and managers: beyond the risks and opportunities, trade unions, starting at international level, must be at the forefront to collectively manage and regulate the impact of digitalisation and the use of algorithms, artificial intelligence and new technologies.

Trade union delegates, highlighting the critical issues already known about remote controls, the protection of privacy and workers' data, and health and safety, complemented the discussion by focussing on the progress of collective bargaining in the area of vocational training (up-skilling, re-skilling), the close correlation between just digital transition and sustainable development, and also specific cases such as the possibility of challenging automated decisions.

In the second panel '*Navigating towards the future: professionals, managers and the impact of new technologies*' **Domenico Iodice**, First Cisl international and collective bargaining manager, focused his presentation on the role of collective bargaining in protecting privacy and social rights of remote workers.



In his speech, particularly appreciated by the delegates, Iodice provided a trade union key to interpreting the phenomenon of digitalisation, which crosses the sector at all latitudes. The massive collection of personal data by companies (datafication) and the management of personnel entrusted to algorithms (people management) risks shattering the social cohesion between people at work, disintermediating their representation and debasing the very role of industrial relations and

collective bargaining, in the claim of entrusting the 'direct management' of the employment relationship with the solution to the various needs of organisational flexibility and individual reconciliation.

The 'human analytics' explicitly pursue objectives of managerial efficiency and certainly not of ethical and social sustainability; in fact, they are generally 'set' on key performance indicators (KPIs) of an exclusively quantitative type, fixed unilaterally by the companies and, moreover, in a barely intelligible manner. Applied to a system of companies organised according to a multi-divisional model, which traditionally pursues the standardisation of results, these techniques achieve a new, pervasive form of management control, which risks invading, if not curbed by collective bargaining, the sphere of personal and social life of working people and creating new forms of commercial pressure.

Algorithmic practices already accompany the processes of selection, career development, organisation of working hours and rhythms, assignment of tasks, performance evaluation, and even trigger disciplinary actions. With the various categorisations (clusters) of personal and performance data of workers, taken over by work tools and external sources (such as social media), new creeping forms of discrimination and opportunities for 'bias' are made possible, thanks to the perennial efficientistic temptation of replacing dialogue between people with interaction between avatars.

The first objective of a modern trade union must be to understand these phenomena and spread knowledge and awareness among people at work.

The second is to oversee the consistency and legitimacy of data acquisition and processing by companies: the 'what' is acquired, the 'how', the 'why'.

The third objective consists of union participation in the process of building 'data sets'.

The fourth and most important is to ensure the irreplaceability of full human oversight, upstream and downstream of the use of Analytics. The moment of critical evaluation and the moment of decision-making cannot be entrusted to machines, so the use of fully automated decision-making systems must be prevented through collective negotiation.

Finally, **Domenico Iodice** recalled the Italian experience of the recent renewal of the bank sector collective agreement, which on the strong initiative of First Cisl introduced the institute of workers' participation, providing for the right to negotiate at company level all its possible forms of implementation. This is the Italian and European way towards a socially sustainable digital development with humans at the core. The subsequent sparkling debate, with interventions by world delegates, returned the image of a financial sector aware of the need for strong, mature and cohesive trade union action.

The second congress day gave space to two equally central themes for the category of Professionals and Managers: on the one hand, the strengthening of the role and presence of women in companies and trade unions, starting from overcoming gender barriers and the pay gap, and on the other hand, the strategic role of Professional & Managers not only in the implementation of company strategies, but also from the point of view of their unionisation, a precondition to make progress in contractual protections.

First Cisl - with its international coordinator Luciano Malvolti - re-launching Cisl proposal for a law on participation, emphasised the strategic role of a professional category that is in close contact with company's top managers, is the chain of transmission of decisions, controls, coordinates and involves workers, and by virtue of this role must necessarily be involved in the company's organisational and decision-making processes.

The congress elected the Finnish engineer Daniel Valtakari as the new President of UNI P&M.