

# FIM-CISL vs. Industry 4.0

FIM-CISL has actively engaged with the topic of Industry 4.0, in the hope that it can achieve some goals inherent to FIM-CISL's traditional vision and mission, but the union must remain critical and in touch

Historically, the FIM-CISL union (Italian Metalworkers Federation) has always been open to technological and organisational changes. So too with Industry 4.0, our union has adopted an optimistic perspective, regarding both the possibility of reviving the manufacturing industry even in high-wage countries, and the chance for people to be emancipated themselves in the experience of work. Coming from a family of fishermen and sailors I remember a typical expression, which explains very well our way of facing innovation: *'If we cannot stop the wind with our hands, it is better to learn to sail in the wind'*. For this reason the FIM-CISL is very proactive on issues of automation and digitalisation in production. The metalworking sector in Italy is one of those sectors potentially most impacted by Industry 4.0.

The first initiatives of the FIM-CISL (in the form of events and a thematic booklet) were carried out by the union even before the launch of the National Industry 4.0 plan by the Italian Ministry of Economic Development. This fact demonstrates that the interest of the FIM-CISL in Industry 4.0 is not driven by the content of specific governmental measures; but by the attention the union has paid to the issue since the first half of the 2010s, and that of researchers, experts and managers, with whom FIM-CISL has relationships. The approach adopted by FIM-CISL in relation to Industry 4.0, and in general about technological and organisational innovation, is one of willingness to anticipate change so as to make it sustainable for all. The dialogue with some Italian experts and researchers has informed this approach, as well as considerations we take from encouraging experiences of other workers, such as in Germany and Scandinavian countries.

Importantly, this is a conceptualisation of Industry 4.0 as a phenomenon that can still be shaped while potentially bringing benefits to companies and workers in terms of flattening of hierarchies, disappearance of repetitive and routine work and growth in cognitive skills. This ultimately emphasises the relevance of some aspects that are traditionally of prime concern to FIM-CISL – namely, employee participation in decision-making processes; decentralised collective bargaining, conceived as closer to companies and territories, thus potentially more capable to address companies' and workers' specific problems; worker skills' development, and so on. Industry 4.0 hence has come to be perceived by FIM-CISL officials as an enabler not only of Italian firms' territorial competitiveness, but also of FIM-CISL's own desire for a human-centred society and

people's self-fulfilment within the experience of work, thanks to a special focus on workers' participation and knowledge.

The expectation that Industry 4.0 could achieve some goals inherent to FIM-CISL's traditional vision and mission, clearly has the merit of promoting FIM-CISL to actively engage on the topic, rather than reducing it to fear of technological advancement. On the other hand however, this might cloud FIM-CISL's judgement on certain occasions. If not accompanied by a constant, critical analysis of the situation in companies and territories, it might draw FIM-CISL and its ideals away from workers and their concrete experiences.

A crucial challenge for FIM-CISL, especially in the light of non-encouraging membership rates, appears to be that of bridging the gap between the union's ideal perspectives of the future of work and workers' actual needs and interests: an effort though already initiated in the latest round of contractual renewals. It seems urgent for FIM-CISL to keep on converting their ambitious objectives in Industry 4.0, once clearly defined and communicated, into more concrete practices of collective bargaining and workers' representation: union organisational structure and union capacities need to be renovated and made consistent with union purposes in a changed scenario, in order not to lose internal legitimacy.

## Collective Bargaining for 'Individual rights to professional training'

Among the results achieved in this proactive commitment from FIM-CISL is the inclusion of an 'individual right to professional training' in the national collective bargaining agreement (CBA) signed in November 2016.

That is an absolute novelty in the world of labour relations in Italy. The social partners (companies and unions) have become aware of the strategic importance of the continuous updating of workers' professional skills, in the light of the digital revolution that is rapidly and radically transforming the world of work. The continuous updating of skills is a factor of competitiveness for the company, a factor of employability and greater professional power of the worker in the labour market.

The CBA includes a 'right to education' providing for 250 hours paid over the three-year CBA period (2017-2019) for literacy courses, fulfilment of educational obligation, Italian courses for foreigners and 150 hours paid for professional, technical, high school diplomas and university and master's degrees. It includes 'leave for training' providing for eleven

**GIANNI ALIOTI**  
is Head of the International Office of the Federazione Italiana Metalmeccanici union (FIM CISL, Italian Metalworkers Federation)



months (maximum but divisible) unpaid leave in order to complete educational obligation or to obtain qualifications at school and university levels. Moreover it includes a new specific chapter on 'continuing education', which provides 24 hours of training, to be carried out over the three-year period. The company has the task of identifying and planning the training courses in working hours on some priorities, among them the development of digital and organisational skills, fundamental to Industry 4.0. The individual worker, if not involved by his company in training initiatives, can exercise this right to 24 hours of training, choosing independently training opportunities available in the region or on online platforms. The company, in this case, must contribute to the cost of training for a maximum of €300 per worker.

For the first time in the history of industrial relations in Italy, with the new national collective agreement the concept of active worker participation was introduced and of self-determination of one's own professional development.

### Smart Unions and Workers' Representatives 4.0

Beyond collective bargaining, FIM-CISL has since 2015 maintained initiatives in the field of research, communication, training, and lobbying. These have achieved concrete outputs (i.e. books, green and white papers, events, projects, etc.).

Since the beginning of 2018, FIM-CISL is coordinating a project - co-funded by the European Commission - on the relationship between the development of Industry 4.0 and unions. 'SUNI - Smart Unions for New Industry' is developed jointly with several research institutes, universities and other industrial unions.<sup>1</sup> The main objective of this project is to strengthen the capacity of the unions to face the challenges arising from the digitalisation of production, thus creating the conditions for the spread of Industry 4.0, and contributing to the reconversion and innovation of factories to be more competitive.

The first phase of the project focused on coordinated research work in Germany, Italy, Spain and Sweden, culminating in the publication of four national reports and a comparative report on Industry 4.0 and unions in these four countries. The project is now developing with the planning of a common (one week) training path shared between all the partners, which will be carried out by FIM-CISL, FICA-UGT (Spain) and IF Metall (Sweden) in their respective countries. The course is involving 15-20 unionists and/or worker representatives of each country. After sharing/discussion by the partners on the results of the training course in the different countries, they will undertake a study-visit to Germany to look at the competences and tasks of the 'workers' representative 4.0'. The Associazione per gli studi Internazionali e Comparati sul Diritto del Lavoro e sulle Relazioni Industriali (ADAPT, Association for International and Comparative Studies on Labour Rights and Industrial Relations)

will produce 'Guidelines' on the skills and activities of the workers' representative 4.0 and share it with partners who will translate the Guidelines from English into their national languages (Italian, Swedish and Spanish). Finally, in May/June 2019 a final meeting will be held at the Industrial Europe headquarters to present the results of the project and plan the dissemination phase. The representatives of the EC and the European federations of the manufacturing companies will also take part in the meeting.

### Unions must re-invent themselves at all levels

It is the FIM-CISL's view that, faced with the challenges of Industry 4.0 and the digital revolution, unions must reinvent themselves - both in terms of organisation and collective agreements - at all levels: workplace, local, national and global.

At the workplace level, unions must promote opportunities for professional qualification and organise the direct employee participation, thus adding value to firm performance while protecting workers' interests. This means developing collective bargaining at company-level on issues such as workers' training, work organisation, health and safety, etc.

At the local level, unions must assist workers throughout their job shifts and the other major changes that occur through their lives. This means developing (sectorial and multi-sectorial) collective bargaining at local level on welfare, income protection, active labour market policies and school-to-work transition, social dialogue/multi-stakeholder cooperation on technological and social innovation.

At the national level, unions must organise and represent new types of workers, as well as provide scope for new types of membership and to strike a balance between efficiency (economic objectives), equity (fair and just treatment of workers) and voice (workers' involvement in shaping their work environment) under the umbrella of sustainability as an overarching principle. This means developing (sectorial and multi-sectorial) collective bargaining at national level on next generation rights (right to training, right to disconnect, privacy by design, information and consultation) and social dialogue / multi-stakeholder cooperation on technological and social innovation (universalisation of welfare provisions and income protection, active labour market policies and training).

At the global level, unions must protect and advance workers' conditions and rights along the whole global value chains to guarantee a responsible re-shoring of manufacturing activities. This means developing the Global Union Networks in the multinational companies; ensuring that transnational collective bargaining on labour standards is respected including among subcontractors; and building up international cooperation between unions over practices of representation and workers' empowerment, as well as global 'name and shame' campaigns.

Unions must reinvent themselves. At national level, collective bargaining needs to include next generation rights – the right to training, the right to disconnect, privacy by design, information and consultation

<sup>1</sup> RUB – Ruhr-Universität Bochum, Germany; ADAPT Modena, Italy; LTU – Luleå Tekniska Universitet, Sweden; UDIMA – Universidad a Distancia de Madrid, Spain; IF Metall Sweden; FICA-UGT Spain; IG Metall Germany; Industrial Europe.