Working conditions and labour market implications of crowd employment and ICT-based mobile work

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COST meeting
Peniche, 3 June 2015

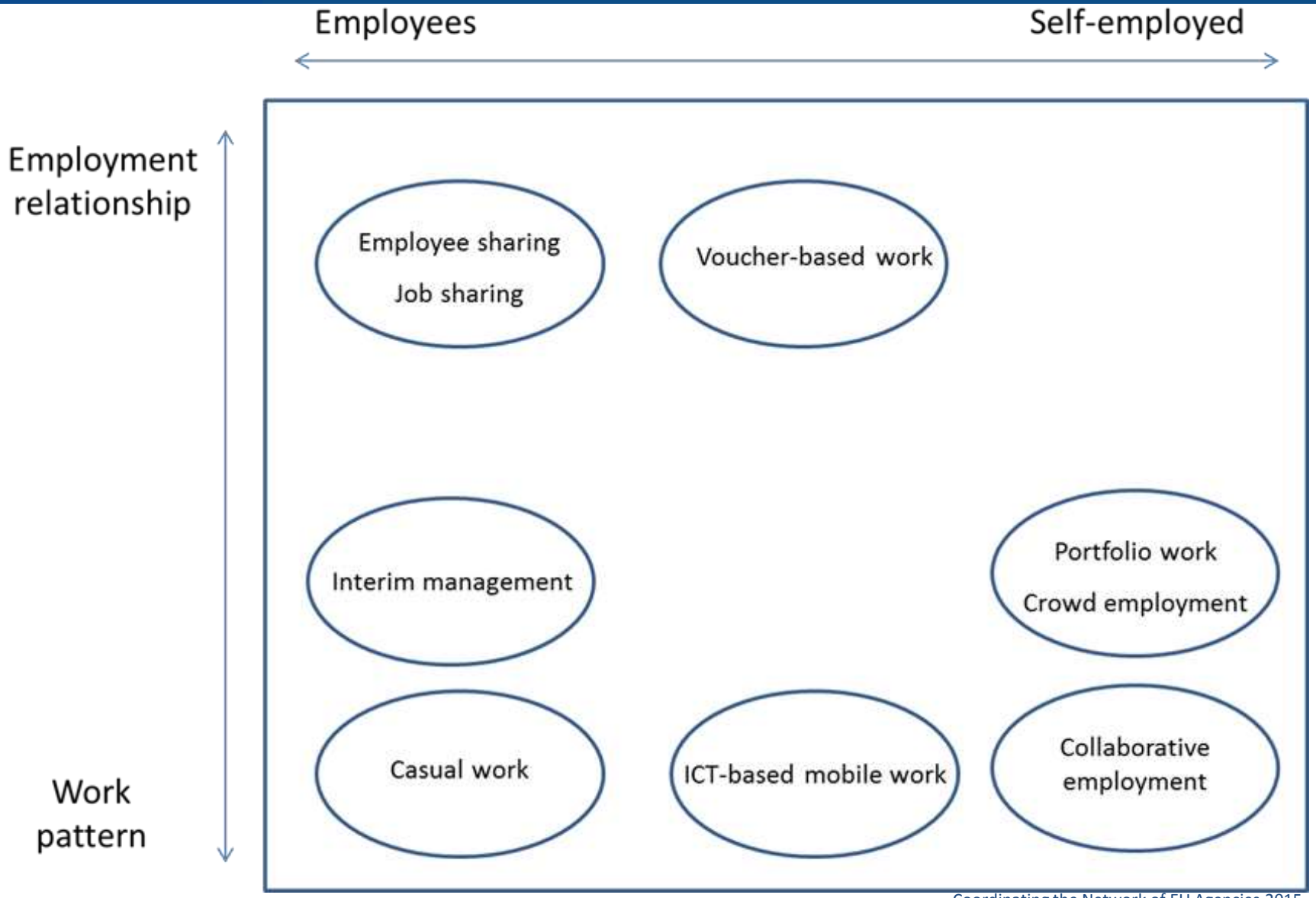
Eurofound

- Agency of the European Commission
- Established in 1975
- Comparative socio-economic research
  - Restructuring/structural change
  - Working conditions
  - Industrial relations
  - Living conditions

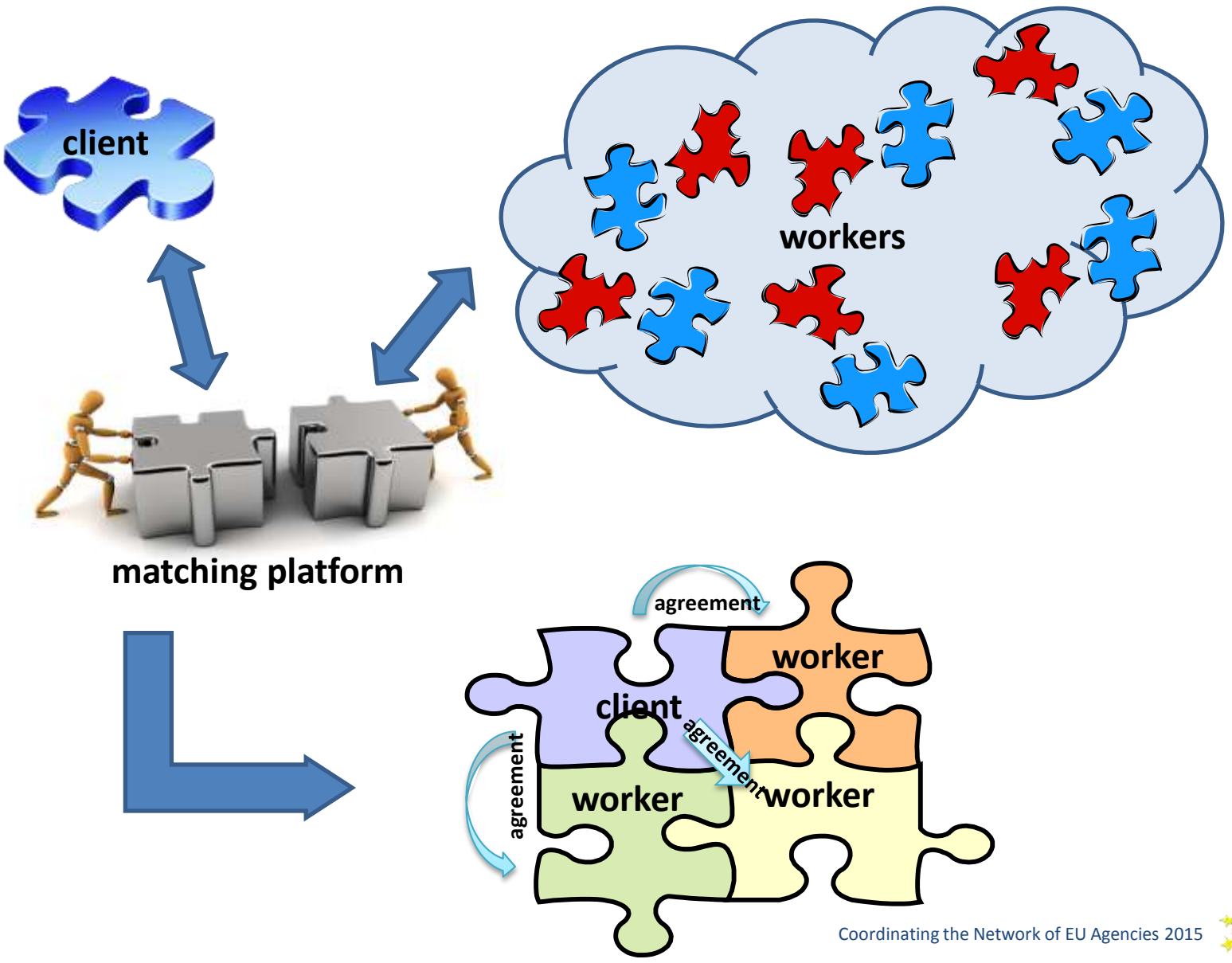
‘New forms of employment’ Background, objectives, methodology

- Anecdotal evidence of new employment forms
- Little information on characteristics and implications
- Research objectives
  - Identify and characterise the new employment forms
  - Illustrate their implications for working conditions and the labour market
  - Derive policy pointers
- Methodology
  - EU wide mapping exercise
  - Literature review and data analysis on selected forms
  - 66 case studies on selected forms across Europe

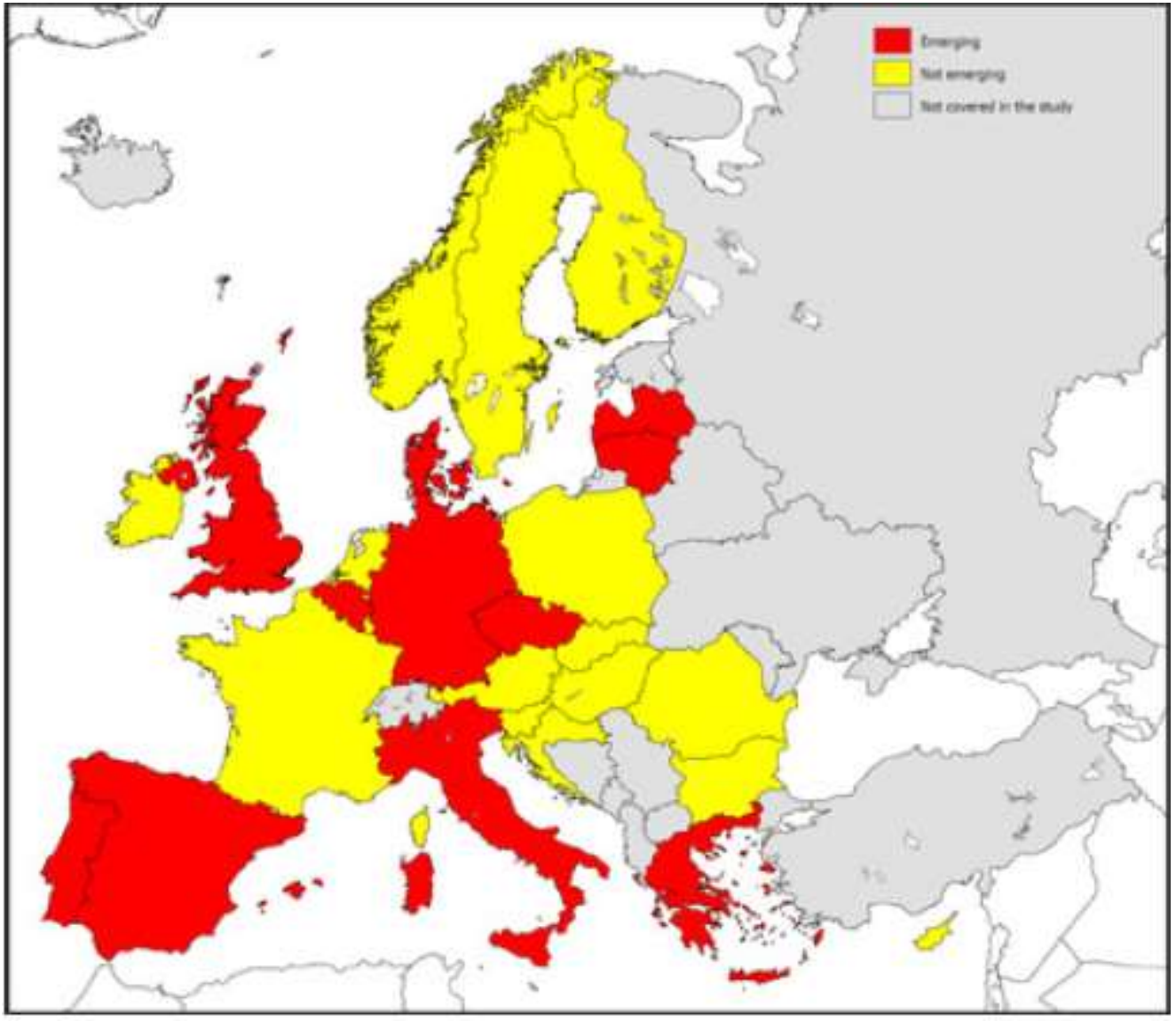
New forms of employment Overview



Crowd employment



Emergence in Europe



Source: Eurofound, based on national contributions

General characteristics

- No specific legal or collectively agreed framework
- No central administration or monitoring
- Types of platforms
  - Competitions
  - Procurement
  - Worker-initiated
- Publishing fee vs. percentage of pay
- Freedom to agree on pay vs. minimum level set by the platform
- Taxation, social protection up to the worker

Clients and workers

- Rather national orientation
- Clients
  - Web content, software development, databases
  - Creative services
  - To access resources, skills
  - To complete the job quicker and cheaper
- Workers
  - Rather young workers
  - High vs. low skills
  - ‘Next to something’ activities (fun, additional income, building up expertise and track record)

Implications for working conditions

Positive effects	Negative effects
High flexibility	Low pay
High autonomy	Insecurity about pay
Personal productivity gains	No access to benefits
Skill development	No social protection
Improved work-life balance	Information asymmetry
	Lack of reliable dispute resolution systems
	Possibility of privacy violation
	Social isolation
	Boredom
	Stress due to need for self-organisation
	Blurring spheres of work and private life

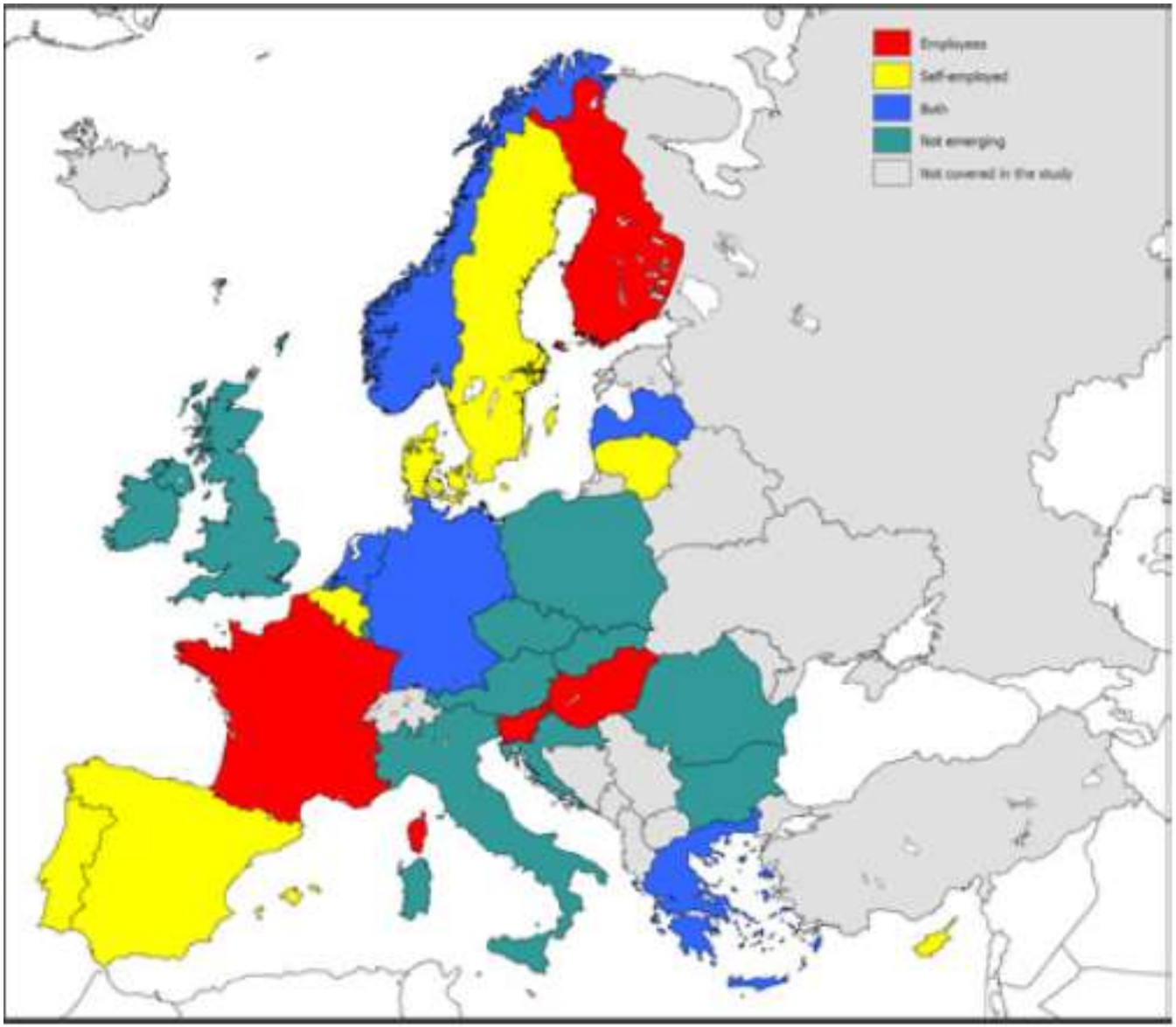
Implications for the labour market

Positive effects	Negative effects
Access to work opportunities	Orientation on tasks rather than jobs
Contribution to inclusive labour markets	Potential for 'race to the bottom' as regards quality of work
Opportunity for income generation and social mobility	Potential crowding out of standard employment
Improvement of competences	
Job creation in the platform administration	

ICT-based mobile work

- Work outside the employer's or a client's premises
- Reliance on ICT, access to a shared computer network
- Informally implemented
- Preconditions for implementation to be considered
- Rather young, male workers
- Rather high-skilled specialists, management
- Demand driven

Emergence in Europe



Source: Eurofound, based on national contributions

Implications

Positive effects	Negative effects
Potential transformation of work organisation	
Potential effect on relative income	
High flexibility	Outsourcing of employer responsibilities
High autonomy	Advanced monitoring/control systems
Personal productivity gains	Increased work intensity and stress level
Improved communication and collaboration	Information overload
Skill development	Social isolation
Contribution to inclusive labour markets	Potential of expected 24/7 availability
Job creation potential	Blurring spheres of work and private life

Conclusions and policy pointers

- Variety of ‘new employment forms’
- Crowd employment and ICT-based mobile work probably ‘big trends’
- Potential for structural change on the labour market
- Issues related to crowd employment
  - Absence of any regulatory framework
  - Data protection, property rights
  - Potential for a structural shift from jobs to tasks
  - Potential deterioration of product quality and social standards
- Issues related to ICT-based mobile work
  - Outsourcing of employer responsibilities
  - 24/7 availability, working time, work intensity, stress
  - ‘digital transparency’ of the worker

Thank you for your attention!

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