



# UNTANGLED

Newsletter Issue 2 / August 2021

## FROM THE EDITORS

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**Welcome to the second UNTANGLED newsletter!** Our researchers have been working hard over the past three months as the project begins to gather pace. We hosted our first webinar, giving stakeholders an opportunity to find out how they can get involved; our researchers presented preliminary results at two conferences; and we had the opportunity to talk about UNTANGLED at the Horizon 2020 – Focus on the Africa Initiative conference. In these pages, you'll find out more about each of these initiatives.

We're also very pleased to offer a thought-provoking piece by Oliver Roethig, a member of our advisory board from UNI Europa, on the hot topic of remote work. As companies adjust to more flexible working arrangements, Oliver calls for vigilance about the challenges for employees that the new arrangements pose, including the costs of work equipment and the limits on workers' ability to organise.

And be sure to check out our article about the importance of stakeholder engagement from Ursula Holtgrewe and Nela Šalamon of the Work and Equal Opportunities Unit at the Centre for Social Innovation GmbH (ZSI). They provide arguments for why engagement is so important, and discuss the practical ways you can get involved.

We hope you've been having a great summer so far, and wish you a relaxing break and success in all your endeavours.



As we adapt to shifting pandemic-related restrictions, we're still putting the finishing touches to our schedule of events for the coming quarter.

**Follow us on social media or check [projectuntangled.eu](https://projectuntangled.eu) to make sure you don't miss out!**



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## DELIVERING THE FULL POTENTIAL OF REMOTE WORK

**Oliver Roethig**  
UNI Europa



**Oliver Roethig**  
heads UNI Europa, the European  
service workers' union.  
He is also a member of the  
UNTANGLED advisory board.

As offices have closed for prolonged periods as part of efforts to contain the pandemic, workers and employers have been thinking “outside the box” or, more precisely, outside the traditional workplace. For many, remote work has provided a solution to the immediate problem.

One year on and it is clear that remote work is here to stay. But how do we ensure that what began as a temporary solution has sufficiently solid foundations to deliver for everyone?

Less commuting and greater comfort have made remote work an alluring idea for many. However, the recent spike has had a darker side. We've seen too many examples of working people footing the bill for turning a part of their homes into workplaces; we've seen an explosion in invasive surveillance software, all too often deployed without the full knowledge of those whose homes are being watched; women have been particularly affected by balancing work with increases in domestic tasks; and workers have had more difficulty accessing representation to remedy abuse.

At UNI Europa, we have developed ten principles to address these issues and ensure workers' rights when working remotely. At the core is accountability. When workers have the confidence to raise issues without fear of retaliation, they can be anticipated and addressed efficiently. That only truly happens when workers have access to strong, independent unions. However, with the deployment of surveillance and control tools as well as through physical isolation, remote work has raised some barriers between workers and their unions.

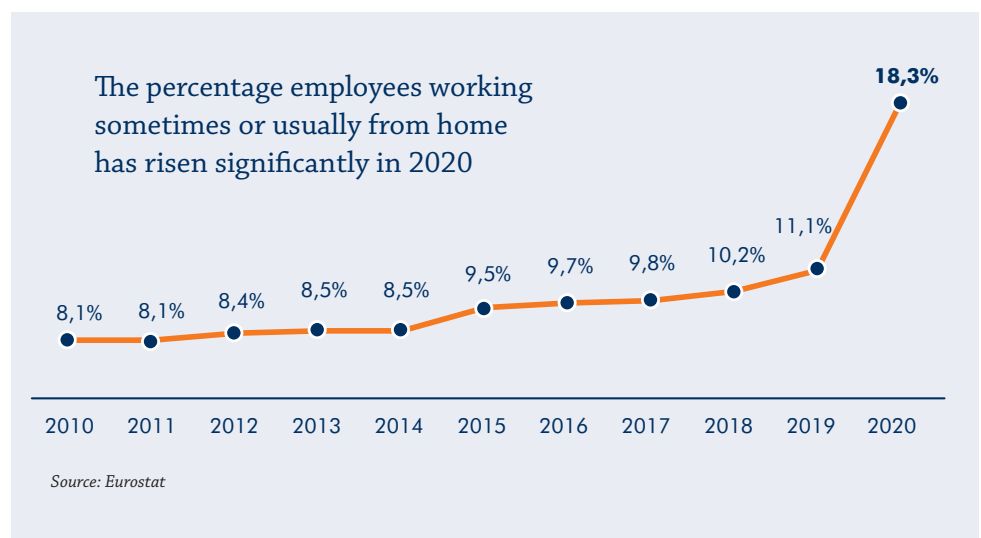
The feeling of being watched has a dramatic cooling effect on people engaging in the worker-to-worker organising that is the backbone of union activity. In addition, there have been instances of union websites being blocked by employer software. Beyond new technologies, remote work also means an end to sharing coffee breaks, hallway conversations and all the other opportunities for workers to organically share experiences and find collective solutions. That is why we make the case for workers to have specific time allocated to union activity when working remotely and for real access, whereby unions can reach out to workers to hear about and address any issues before they snowball.

Building a solid foundation for remote work also means guarding against any possible discrimination. People working remotely should not be overlooked for career development or training opportunities just because they are not in the office. It is important to note that increasing access to remote work can encourage more women to better balance work with unpaid personal responsibilities and thus remain active in the labour market. 'Gender-neutral' remote work will only be possible if accompanied by a cultural shift towards an equal sharing of care and household duties, as well as access to good and affordable care services. At its core, remote work should be about lifting constraints, not adding new ones. To do so, it must be voluntary and reversible.

## > DELIVERING THE FULL POTENTIAL OF REMOTE WORK

Employers have been welcoming the opportunity to lighten their office bills. But these costs should not simply be shifted onto workers. Employers should remain responsible for the health and safety of workers, their work equipment and the costs that come with working remotely. Finally, surveillance tools to monitor remote workers should be restricted, and employers should respect regular working hours and the right to disconnect.

Remote work has the potential to improve the way we work and live. We know it can be a win-win for workers and employers. The blueprint I've outlined is based on people's lived experiences and aims to deliver the full potential of remote work for the world of work. The best way to ensure that we achieve this potential is social dialogue and collective bargaining. That will guarantee that workers have a real say in shaping their working life and workplace.



## INVOLVING STAKEHOLDERS IN UNTANGLED

**Ursula Holtgrewe (ZSI)**  
and **Nela Šalamon (ZSI)**



**Ursula Holtgrewe**  
is a sociologist and the Head  
of the Work and Equal  
Opportunities Unit  
at the Centre for Social  
Innovation GmbH (ZSI).



**Nela Šalamon**  
is a junior researcher in the  
Work and Equal Opportunities  
Unit at the Centre for Social  
Innovation GmbH (ZSI).

UNTANGLED aims to fill gaps in knowledge about the three key mega-trends of technological change, globalisation and demographic change, and on the socio-economic challenges and opportunities they pose for the EU and globally. At the moment these trends have moved out of focus somewhat, as the Covid-19 pandemic and the climate crisis are filling the headlines. However, it is quite clear that digitalisation and biotech, global value chains in manufacturing and services, and societies' demographics have their impacts on the pandemic and on the climate crisis in various parts of the world. In turn, the current crises change and shape the trends that UNTANGLED is investigating – and show how crucial social inclusion and integration are to maintaining and improving societal resilience. Indeed, the ways in which trends, gradual changes and disruptions are interrelated, and for whom they offer opportunities and challenges, is far from an academic question.

We are exploring the impacts on the economy at large, the labour market, working conditions, and also on social structures and social inequality. National, regional and local economies are affected; social structures are changing; new skills are required and old ones are being re-evaluated; gains and opportunities are unequally distributed along well-known and newly emerging divides in class, education, ethnicity, age, gender and/or region. The impacts concern policymakers on the regional, national and international levels, and other stakeholders as well: representatives of business, of companies that are developing or implementing new technologies; trade unions, employer and industry associations; other labour market actors, including those involved in general and vocational education and training; representatives of civil society, professional and engineering associations, and vulnerable and disadvantaged groups such as immigrants or women; and researchers from various disciplines.

They need to make sense of what is going on, how trends and their impacts interact. Indeed, this sensemaking, the perception of opportunities and challenges for various constituencies, feeds into the strategies of collective actors. These strategies and actions again influence the trends we are investigating, both directly and indirectly, with intended and unintended consequences. In the understanding of UNTANGLED, the trends of technological change, globalisation and demographic change are not external forces that descend on societies. They emerge from interrelated collective and individual actions and decisions (such as investing, bargaining, strategizing, choosing jobs or recruiting, emigrating or starting families).

For this reason, UNTANGLED will not just feed research results and evidence to stakeholders and the general public. We believe in research as a joint and collaborative activity in society. Our researchers are engaging with stakeholders and practitioners and their experiences and discourses from the very beginning of the project. These experts will refine research questions, validate analyses, provide feedback and help clarify the implications of the project's results for policy, labour markets, business, social equality and inclusion.

## > INVOLVING STAKEHOLDERS IN UNTANGLED

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UNTANGLED offers a **series of workshops and webinars** with inputs from the project's research and from related European and national projects and practices; four **“open virtual expert cafés”** with two researchers from the project and an opportunity to ask questions, require information or advice, briefly present an initiative, or brainstorm on an issue of interest; and **an invitation-only forum** hosted in a subdomain of UNTANGLED's project website.

All these activities will bring together experts and practitioners from various fields with economists and social scientists, to gain first-hand research insight, exchange views and perspectives internationally, and challenge researchers to explore and increase the relevance of their results to various practice and policy fields. Participants are also invited to share their own initiatives and projects that may be relevant.

All project partners are currently informing their contacts of the project's activities and inviting them to join the stakeholder community. If you, the readers of the newsletter, want to get involved, you are welcome to join directly through a small survey that helps us focus on your areas of interest and your preferred modes of participation.

You can find it here: <https://survey.zsi.at/index.php/566899?lang=en>. Taking the survey does not place any obligation on you, but it will help us extend more specific invitations to virtual or (hopefully) in-person formats. We look forward to having you join the conversation!



## GET TO KNOW US



### LISER in UNTANGLED:

At UNTANGLED, LISER is responsible for Work Package 5: Micro-level analysis, and is involved in all WPs.

### LISER's team in UNTANGLED



**Ludivine Martin**  
LISER's  
Project Manager

### LISER

The **Luxembourg Institute of Socio-Economic Research (LISER)** is a public research institute which carries out both fundamental and applied research in analysing societal changes, aiming to advance knowledge, support public policy and inform public opinion. Its research is organised in three departments: Living Conditions, the Labour Market, and Urban Development and Mobility, as well as three cross-departmental research programmes on: Crossing Borders, Health and Health Systems, and Digital Transformations. The Labour Market Department leads the research performed at LISER in UNTANGLED.

### Expertise

LISER's Labour Market department conducts research on the effects of public policies and societal changes on employment and the workplace. The department's key themes revolve around (i) the impact of public policies on employment in the context of high cross-border mobility and (ii) the impact of current socioeconomic challenges (such as digital transformations, diversity and ageing of the workforce) on companies' modes of organisation, performance, employee skills and behaviour, and labour relations. The department's research is multidisciplinary (economics, statistics, sociology, political science, law) and makes use of various tools (policy evaluation, quantitative, experimental and qualitative methods). The department also uses its research infrastructure and competencies to advise policymakers and inform the public about new findings in these fields.



**Pauline Bourgeon**  
Researcher



**Michal Burzynski**  
Researcher



**Frederic Docquier**  
Researcher



**Laetitia Hauret**  
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**David Marguerit**  
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**Patrick Thill**  
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**Adrien Thomas**  
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**Philippe Van Kerm**  
Researcher



**Bertrand Verheyden**  
Researcher

## GET TO KNOW US

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ZENTRUM FÜR SOZIALE INNOVATION  
CENTRE FOR SOCIAL INNOVATION



### ZSI

The **Centre for Social Innovation (ZSI)** is an independent scientific institute based in Vienna. It conducts research on the social embeddedness, contexts and impacts of innovation, and contributes to the designing of social, technological and organisational innovation processes that contribute to beneficial social change. ZSI's Work and Equal Opportunities Department is engaged in UNTANGLED.

### Expertise

The Work and Equal Opportunities Department focuses on socially innovative topics in the fields of labour markets, social policy and social inclusion. ZSI conducts quantitative, qualitative and mixed-method research, often with participatory and co-creation methods; supports the development of social policy strategies in multi-stakeholder environments; and provides policy advice, foresight and facilitation.

### ZSI in UNTANGLED:

At UNTANGLED ZSI is involved in all work packages and is the leader of WP 8, Stakeholder Engagement. By involving a variety of stakeholders, this work package aims to maximise the relevance and impact of the project's research and thus ensure that the policy advice delivered by UNTANGLED will be relevant and practical.

### ZSI's team in UNTANGLED

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**Ursula HOLTGREWE**  
Local project manager,  
leader of WP 8:  
Stakeholder engagement



**Martina Lindorfer**  
Researcher



**Nela Šalamon**  
Researcher

## WHAT'S NEW AT UNTANGLED



### UNTANGLED's First Findings: Robot Adoption Increases Employee Flows

Are robots contributing to the rise of unemployment? So far the research findings are mixed: in some industrialised countries robot adoption leads to layoffs, but in others there is no rise in jobless numbers. Four UNTANGLED researchers: Myrielle Gonschor, Ronald Bachmann, Piotr

Lewandowski and Karol Madoń are exploring the effects of robotisation on movements on the European job market: how robots affect rates of job loss and of finding new jobs. They are also analysing which groups of workers are particularly affected by robots.

The researchers presented their preliminary findings at the 26th Annual Conference of the Society of Labour Economists and 34th Annual Conference of the European Society for Population Economics. The full paper will be available soon, and a sneak peek at some of their preliminary findings already shows interesting results:

- Robot adoption leads to a slight reduction of layoffs, and to a small increase in job finding rates
- There are large differences between countries: the effect on layoffs is stronger in countries with lower labour costs
- Generally, robot adoption increases labour demand and therefore raises employment.



### UNTANGLED at Horizon Europe – Focus on the Africa Initiative event

On 16 July, Karolien Lenaerts (HIVA – KU LEUVEN) presented the objectives, methods and expected results of UNTANGLED at Horizon Europe – Focus on the Africa Initiative, demonstrating how EU and South African partners can collaborate on Horizon2020 projects in the social

sciences. The event was organized by the European South African Science and Technology Advancement Programme (ESASTAP), a collaborative initiative to promote, facilitate and coordinate research, development and innovation cooperation between South Africa and the EU.

The EU seeks to enhance cooperation with Africa to promote the search for locally adapted solutions to global challenges, which often hit Africa hardest. UNTANGLED research fits with these objectives as it explores the impact of globalisation, technological transformations and demographic change on labour markets in the EU and beyond. Our project includes researchers from Africa, Asia and Latin America.

## WHAT'S NEW AT UNTANGLED

### First UNTANGLED webinar

Our introductory webinar on 5 July provided an opportunity for stakeholders, colleagues and everyone who is interested in the impact of globalisation, technological transformations and demographic change on labour markets in the European Union to get to know our project. Our researchers briefly explained the goals and planned research output of our three-year project.

The UNTANGLED research consortium wants to stay close to policymakers, labour market actors, social partners and other stakeholders to be sure we're asking the right questions and including in our research all groups that will be affected by changes on the job market, Ursula Holtgrewe of the ZSI said during the event.

The webinar brought together 30 participants from academia, think tanks and government succeeding in its goal of initiating a discussion between project participants and stakeholders.

If you missed our webinar but want to know how to help improve UNTANGLED research and make our policy advice relevant, check the UNTANGLED YouTube channel for a recording.





UNTANGLED is a three-year interdisciplinary Horizon 2020 research project that seeks to examine the interconnected trends of globalisation, demographic change and technological transformation, and their effects on labour markets in the European Union and beyond. By engaging a broad range of stakeholders, including companies and civil society organisations, we will develop practical policy proposals to help governments cushion the negative impacts of these trends and ensure their benefits are enjoyed fairly across regions and sectors.

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