MEASURING AND CREATING DECENT WORK IN THE CRISIS – NECESSARY AND REALISABLE OBJECTIVES

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The notion of decent work and decent work indicators developed by the ILO have been part of the strategy of moving to both more job-creating growth in developing countries and growth that combines with job creation social protection, decent working conditions and respect for rights to bargain collectively and freedom of association. In industrialised countries, both the OECD – in the 2003 Employment and Labour ministerial meeting and the European union in the Lisbon Strategy, launched in 2000, called for creating ‘more and better jobs’. There was some progress in bringing more workers into paid employment and in cutting unemployment rates, prior to the onset of the economic crisis in 2008. However the goal of ‘better jobs’, has not been seriously pursued in OECD countries in general. There is both a perception and indeed in a reality that even before the crisis that many of the new jobs that were created in the past 15 years were “bad jobs” with workers have to work longer hours and to accept non-standard employment contracts. Employers have been seen to be more focused on short-term profits, with less investment in training and less responsive to negotiating with trade unions. This has contributed to the growth in earnings inequality as documented by the OECD. In some countries it is argued that this has also been part of the imbalanced model of growth of the past two decades that contributed to the financial crisis.

This paper examines the indicators that have been developed for the measurement of the quality of working life and “good jobs” in Europe and the United States. It argues that in the employment strategies developed to cope with the crisis and also in terms of the exit strategies being developed it is essential that OECD governments include the objective of creating employment of good quality based on these indicators and definitions and indicated in the communiqué of the G20 Pittsburgh Summit by “Putting Quality Jobs at the Heart of the Recovery”.

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