

Forum : Citizen's forum of Labour

2026

Theme : Empowering the youth to drive/ thrive/ embrace and match the requirements of the future labour market

Name of the citizen : Román Merino

Family situation ☐ Married / dating ☒ Single ☐ With kids, if so how many _____	Education level ☐ Primary ☒ Secondary ☐ University
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1. How are you concerned by the subject?

My name is Román Merino and I am a twenty-eight year old worker. After high-school, I had the chance to be recruited by Samsung to work at the Samsung Electronics Campus, in Jakarta. Precisely, I work assembling the last pieces of products like smartphones or home devices. I work on an assembly line, which means I'm only one of the several steps of production.

I have started working at a very young age, when the market was yet untouched by artificial intelligence. Today, I am already seeing the challenges that the labour market will have to confront if it wants to stay reliable. Samsung is one of the biggest enterprises in Asia and in the world and I am only one of the thousands of employees they use. However, as Samsung itself has stated, the project of completely automatizing the chain production of their factories by 2030 worries me. My work is simple and even easy after gaining experience, so I fear I can be replaced by a machine. I can't afford to lose this job. I have done this all my life, having to learn a completely different job will be exhausting and extremely complicated. I think AI should be supervised by a higher authority to ensure its proper development.

Samsung does not have clear employee policies in Indonesia. I am lucky to have been recruited directly by Samsung, so I work five days per week, eight hours every day. The salary is honest and permits me to live comfortably. However, I am very concerned about the work conditions of other employees. As any other enterprise, Samsung hires workers in countries where the employee is not protected. The multinational firm faced backlash before the Covid because of the work conditions of its workers in Malaysia. It has been proven that these workers were underpaid, in terrible conditions and that their passports were confiscated so they could not return to their country. This is called forced labour and is the new form of slavery. According to the International Labour Organization, 27.6 million people are in forced labour. I even know that some of the workers at this factory were recruited by third-party enterprises and, as they are in a large majority immigrants, do not possess the same rights as us.

With Gen Z comes an evolution of work culture around the globe. I am part of the generation that is re-shaping the traditional labour models but I do not work like them. Mental health is without doubt more important than productivity, however, if we take the example of an irregular worker, that person will never have the possibility of choosing what is the best for them because of his/her situation. With my co-workers, we never discuss these topics, we just work. Gen Z views work as another aspect of their life rather than the central one. This change of mindset will have consequences on the labour market.

We can observe that the decreasing working hours is not new and Gen Z is not the first generation to experience it. However, the decline observed after the 80s was caused by the automatization of work with the advent of computers. Nowadays, the decline of working hours comes from a shift in the mindset of workers rather than from a new way of working.

2. What do you suggest on your scale ?

I think we can progress significantly thanks to AI, but its evolution must be supervised by competent authorities. In any case, I do not think we have to stop AI programs and research. Without a doubt, artificial intelligence is our next step in evolution and survival, nonetheless, the impact on our societies should be regulated to permit a controlled transition.

According to the International Labour Organisation, in 2026, there are approximately two billion people working in the informal sector. All these people cannot have a proper life nor future because of the irregularity of their situation and the abuse of the corporations who take advantage of the informal labour market. I am part of one of the biggest syndicates of Indonesia, the Federation of Indonesian Metal Workers' Union (FSPMI). I was not working when a major event for Indonesian trade unions occurred, but everyone has heard of the 2012 clash between Samsung and its subcontractors. Around 80 of them tried to join the FSPMI to demand better treatments. In response, Samsung hired 400 preman, informal mercenaries, to end demonstrations and crush the new trade union. Even though these protests did not work, I have recently heard that the protests led by the Korean syndicates against Samsung achieved their goals. Through syndicates, I think we can improve the life of numerous of these informal workers. We will need international cooperation to identify clearly the number of these workers and the needs they have to start improving.

Even if we complain about our long shifts, we rarely think about quitting. Most of us completely depend on the salary earned working for Samsung. I have never thought about giving up because of mental health problems. But I perfectly understand the mind state of the new workers. Our societies are transforming and us with them. This type of transition does not generally require approval, in this case, I think the labour market is going to adapt itself to the new requirements and needs of the new generation of employees and not the other way around.