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Themes and sub-themes

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Emerging trends in times of instability: New challenges  
and opportunities for social security

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## THEME 1. FACING THE CHALLENGES OF AN EVOLVING POPULATION STRUCTURE

There has been a fundamental transformation in recent years in the population structure, which varies in relation to the level of development of countries. In the industrialized countries, societies are ageing, which is giving rise to the emergence of a significant group of older persons with full capacity for work, although they are outside the labour market, while the countries of the South are now characterized by the youth of their societies, with a plethora of young workers and pressure for emigration. In view of these upheavals, social security programmes are being obliged to adapt their programmes rapidly to the new needs of an increasing migrant population, often subject to precarious conditions of work, the numbers of which will increase as the imbalance between societies widens. In the industrialized countries, it will be a question of adapting to the redefinition of work and retirement.

### 1.1. Struggling against precariousness in the labour market: what space for activation programmes and social investment policies?

Confronted with the consequences of the financial and economic crisis, the challenge for vocational activation and reintegration programmes is not to deviate from their original objective (renewing the skills of the workforce without interruption or unemployment). In order to do so, these measures have to form part of preventive social security policies, be adapted to socio-economic situations which differ from those in which they were implemented and, accordingly, be targeted more towards the new categories of persons at risk. This is combined with the growing prevalence of highly productive economies in a world that is increasingly globalized and competitive. In the context of the global knowledge revolution, it is also urgent to allow social policies to go beyond remedial measures, and to take the form of preventive action based on a logic of social investment. *How can activation programmes be maintained and reinforced during periods of economic crisis? What is the impact on the most vulnerable categories? How can the human and social capital of young generations be improved so that they can achieve long-term integration into the labour market? How are social investment policies to be integrated more effectively into social security programmes?*

### 1.2. Facing population movements: making social security accessible to migrants

The attraction of high-income countries for migrant workers, particularly due to the more significant economic opportunities that they are able to offer, is combined with a demographic transition characterized by the rapid ageing of the population in the latter countries which is, in turn, likely to increase demand for foreign labour, thereby reinforcing international migration flows. In view of these developments, it is urgent to identify the social security needs of migrant populations that are principally active in sectors (construction, manufacturing, hotels and catering, health care, education, domestic work and agriculture) where the process is particularly advanced of the conditions of work becoming more flexible. *How must social security adapt its programmes to improve the integration of migrants and low-skilled workers, as well as to facilitate the mobility of workers?*

### 1.3. Redefining work and retirement in a long-life society: towards a new management of ages

The increase in life expectancy, due in particular to the improvement in the health standards of the elderly, has resulted in the emergence in a new population group, generally known as the "elderly", which is fully capable of working even though it is outside the labour market. In the context of the emergence of a society that lives longer, one-third of which is composed of persons over 60 years of age, such a situation is not tenable. Over and above measures to lengthen the period of occupational activity, it is necessary to introduce a new management of age groups involving a process through which individuals optimize their chances of achieving physical, social and mental well-being throughout their lives so as to live longer in good health, remain productive and maintain their quality of life during the latter part of their existence. *How should social security adapt to this new situation? Through the abolition of retirement? By radically modifying conditions of work?*

## THEME 2. FACING THE CHALLENGES OF MULTIPLE CRISES CONFRONTING THE WORLD TODAY

The paradigm change for social security cannot be circumvented in a global context affected by multiple crises, of which the current economic and financial crisis is the most recent manifestation. The consequences of an increasingly unstable world (high unemployment, persistence of the informal economy, the increase in poverty and vulnerability, etc.) emphasizes the importance of solidarity for social security policies. The challenge for social security here is to make up for the inadequacies of the labour market, extend its coverage and pursue economic development through dynamic policy-making.

### 2.1. Strengthening the legitimacy of social security in times of crises: Between solidarity and dynamic social security

Demographic and family changes, the upheavals on the labour market, the financial crisis and its economic corollary are challenging economic models based on the market economy and growth, as well as social policy options which emphasize individual responsibility and financial market performance. This, in turn, offers the opportunity to reinforce the legitimacy of social security – both as an essential proactive component of a “good society” and as a collective means of coming to the assistance of the population concerned and improving its well-being – although with the challenge that it will be more dynamic if it renews its basic parameters. *Can a new paradigm be conceptualized with a view to drawing up social security reforms? Should it be based on solidarity and the characteristics of a dynamic social security system? How would that take form in the context of specific social policies? What new limits (standards) should there be for social security?*

### 2.2. Financing issues: What innovations for a sustainable social security?

The financing of social security systems is confronted by two challenges which differ appreciably from those experienced in recent decades. These include the ageing of the population and the consequent increase in medical care, as well as the constant trend in the labour market towards more precarious conditions and the stabilization of unemployment rates at relatively high levels. Although there is a broad consensus on what is expected of social security systems – the extension of coverage and the provision of adequate benefits – these objectives can only be attained by guaranteeing the financial viability of benefit programmes in the medium and long term. *What new financing mechanisms are available for a long-term sustainable social security system? What are the lessons to be drawn from the various national experiences in this respect?*

### 2.3. Questioning the issue of extension of coverage: Between myth and reality

The extension of social security coverage is one of the most difficult contemporary issues confronting social policy. Studies estimate that between 70 and 80 per cent of the global population live in conditions of “social insecurity”. On the one hand, the industrialized countries are subject to strong pressure to diminish the coverage of workers in a context of international competition, precarious employment and the ageing of the population. On the other hand, emerging countries are making progress in the extension of universal coverage for the elderly and the poorest, although the informal economy is taking on significance and jeopardizing all policies for the real extension of social security. *What are the chances of success for recent and innovative policies aimed at improving and extending social security coverage? What are the long-term perspectives?*

## THEME 3. IMPACT OF MAJOR EMERGING MEGA-TRENDS ON SOCIAL POLICIES AND ON FORTHCOMING SOCIAL SECURITY CHALLENGES

The major emerging trends, including societal, technological, environmental and geo-political factors, represent a challenge for social security, which needs to investigate the best way of facing up to them. The objective is to identify what will be at stake for social security administrations in the five, ten or even twenty years to come and to develop a forward-looking vision to respond to these challenges when they arise.

### 3.1. Rethinking the design of social security in an unstable world: How to cope with the challenges posed by external “stresses”

The new exogenous “stress factors”, consisting of global warming and environmental issues, population movements in an environment that is changing rapidly and the scope of new pandemics, are becoming increasingly significant. In this respect, they imply the need to rethink the architecture of social security with a view to responding to the new expectations arising out of these changes. This is particularly true for low and middle income countries, in view of the fact that their formal social protection system is far from covering the whole of the population and that informal schemes are struggling due to the rapidity of economic, social and demographic transformations. Under these circumstances, research needs to be undertaken and policy recommendations made in respect of both existing schemes and new programmes. *How can the impact of exogenous factors on social security programmes be assessed? How can they be confronted?*

### 3.2. Impact of new technologies on social policies and the effectiveness of citizen-oriented approach

Social security institutions are today developing in a new environment characterized by new demands. The economic slowdown that is currently being experienced may offer these institutions an opportunity to adopt a balanced vision of their activities and to create possibilities for change which may help them to become more effective and better organized in time. Administrators have the opportunity to engage in innovations which can help them to confront the new situation of multiple challenges and decreased resources. They also need to find the means of optimizing the value of existing programmes and services, while developing new strategies that are capable of responding to the needs of the personnel and the expectations of clients, for example by developing the permanent participation of citizens in the formulation of policies and programmes. *How can social security be adapted to the new requirements of the knowledge economy and the digital economy? What impact may new technologies have in return on social security in terms of governance values and methods?*

### 3.3. The emergence of new leading economic powers: What new values for social security policies?

The emergence of new economic powers will lead to changes in the conception of social security. The “European” and “Anglo-Saxon” models will now be confronted with new approaches adopted by recent arrivals on the international scene. For example, Brazil, the Russian Federation, India and China (the BRIC countries) will question existing social security models in the light of their own principles and values and will participate in disseminating original types of social security policies that will find their place in countries at differing income levels and with different institutional architectures. *How will these geo-political developments fashion a new future for social security? What impact will they have on the principal issues of the extension of social protection coverage, the ageing of the population and the increasing informality of the labour market?*