Digitalisation at the heart of social partners' commitment to keep the lights on



(9 April 2020) In these times of public health crisis, digital technologies enable the electricity sector to keep the lights on, adapting traditional models from generation to smart infrastructure in our constantly transforming industry. Today, as the majority of people around Europe are having to social distance and telework, digital skills and infrastructure are proving to be more indispensable than ever.

However, digitalisation presents both challenges and opportunities for workers in the electricity sector. In this respect, social dialogue is crucial as trade unions and employers shape the process of digitalising the electricity industry in a way that would equally benefit companies, workers and customers.
The European Social Partners in the Electricity Sector have committed to implementing a unique Framework of Actions by 2022 to spearhead this agenda. They share the view that digitalisation is a challenging opportunity to boost innovation and promote smart technologies. This process will affect not only

communication and connectivity, but also the nature of job profiles and required skills. To this end, the European Social Partners have agreed on:

- Providing guidelines for a socially responsible digital transition, in the case of restructuring due to the introduction of enhanced digitalised processes;
- Ensuring that new entrants to the labour market are equipped with the right skills, while experienced employees have access to adequate re-skilling and upskilling through continuous professional development and life-long learning;
- Promoting a comprehensive Quality Framework for Apprenticeships as one of the top priorities, together with the steps to ensure mobile and transferable skills in the electricity sector;
- Launching a follow-up project with focus on building capacity to engage in effective skills partnerships with vocational education and training (VET) providers, while maintaining intelligence on employment trends;
- Helping develop strategies to prevent psycho-social risks at the workplace that could significantly affect workers and organisations, in line with the Working Time Directive, national legislation and collective agreements;
- The importance of recognising the right to disconnect and remain committed to safeguarding working time arrangements and well-being at work;
- Exchanging best national practices on the usage of worker related data, and joining forces to provide national affiliates with indicative guidelines for the use of such data.

The European economy is going through a major turbulence due to the COVID-19 crisis. The implementation of new technologies and business models can support a swift recovery of the electricity sector from the upcoming economic downturn. The European Social Partners are committed to shaping the future of work through a just digital transformation that benefits everybody.

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