Workers deserves more dignity ahead of the technological revolution!

The results of EPSU - OSE research on the impact of digitalisation on homecare and employment services

The European Public Service Union (EPSU) commissioned the European Social Observatory (OSE) to carry out a study on the impact of digitalisation on the content and quality of jobs in two key sectors: home care, and public employment services. Demographic changes are leading to an increased demand for home care, while public employment services play an essential role in bringing down unemployment. The aim of the research was to look at how new technologies affect people’s work, in terms of working conditions, work organisation, working time, health and safety, learning and training, type of employment contracts etc. Ensuring quality employment is a major concern for EPSU.

The research highlighted how the growing presence of interconnected databases
and scheduling tools in the form of software applications (apps) for devices such as computers, tablets or smart phones is radically changing work organisation in these sectors.

The main findings:

- For workers in public employment services, the biggest impact of digitalisation was on intensification of work (nearly two thirds of respondents), followed by monitoring of work and workers, performance-oriented management and mental health outcomes (over half of respondents). Those surveyed also mentioned a perceived loss/standardisation of social relationships with colleagues (37%).
- The introduction of digital tools in the work of home care workers is more recent and it is used to manage schedules and organise work and shifts, recording also performance and sometimes the working time spent on tasks. Generally it enables communication with the employer and co-workers, especially by phone and by email. For home care workers, the potential effects of digitalisation were of highest relevance in mental health outcomes followed by loss of control over working processes/methods, physical health and performance-oriented management.
- In both sectors, workers also mentioned that the digital transition makes it possible to work faster, have better access to the necessary information, allows for better time management, minimises the loss of information in complex information management systems, makes communication in the workplace and across agencies across the country more efficient. Digital tools - if properly introduced with workers’ cooperation and support - can therefore improve the monitoring of service users by allowing workers to spend more time efficiently focusing on complex cases in a context in which they have a very heavy workload.
- A concern was raised by workers about the poor or non-existent professional training on the use of digital tools and about the need for time to adapt to the use of digital technology.
- Some workers mentioned mental fatigue and increased stress resulting from the need to regularly consult a schedule and to respond quickly to requests by telephone or email from users, colleagues or supervisors.

You can find the research here:
The impact of digitalisation on job quality in European public services - the case of homecare and employment service workers, final report by OSE for EPSU

Impact of digitalisation on job quality in public services Homecare and Public Employment Services, Presentation by R. Peña-Casas, D. Ghailani & S. Coster, European social observatory - OSE

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