



Responding to the challenges of digitalisation

A toolkit for trade unions



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Collective bargaining and digitalisation – EPSU project 2019-20– with the support of the European Commission

CONTENTS

Foreword	3
Introduction	4
Information and consultation, social dialogue and collective bargaining	6
Restructuring and jobs	8
Skills and training	9
Health and safety, including psychosocial risks	11
Working time, work-life balance and the right to disconnect	13
Monitoring and surveillance	14
Data privacy	15
Artificial intelligence	17
Telework	18
Negotiating checklist	20
Further reading	22

The information in this toolkit is based on discussions and material presented in a series of five seminars held between September 2019 and October 2020 on the theme of digitalisation and collective bargaining. The seminar series was run by Andrea Broughton and Jeff Bridgford (Ecorys) and Eckhard Voss (wmp consult).

FOREWORD

Digitalisation has the potential to positively transform public services and the jobs of public service workers. Quicker and easier access to services and increased participation of citizens can be combined with better quality jobs as repetitive work is replaced with more fulfilling tasks. However, trade unions must be involved in the transformation process not just to ensure that workers have their fair share of the benefits of digitalisation but also to deal with the potential downside. Significant changes in work organisation and increased work intensity are among the factors that can undermine workers' wellbeing.

Public service trade unions need to assert their rights to information and consultation and use collective bargaining to get the best from the digital transformation. We need to ensure that transparency, democratic involvement and privacy for workers and people are guaranteed.

This toolkit sets out some of the main issues that trade unions have to address in reaping the benefits of digitalisation while preventing or reducing any negative outcomes. It also includes examples from European and national levels of how trade unions have used social dialogue and collective bargaining to regulate the transformation of work and working conditions.

INTRODUCTION

Digitalisation has become one of the key drivers of change in employment and trade unions are rightly focusing on how to ensure that this trend does not result in detriment for workers. This is a challenge for trade unions in a context of continuing austerity, and most recently the huge disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Digitalisation can take a range of forms across the public services, from the automation of administrative processes and interactions with clients, such as chatbots, to the digitalisation of service provision in the areas of health, energy and transport services. It can also drive the development of new public services, including mobility as a service and the creation of new online advice services.

In addition to the effects on service delivery, digital technologies are changing work and working conditions. Digital technologies and automation can support workers with new tools and systems that make work less dangerous, strenuous, dirty or monotonous. However, they also may lead to increased monitoring and control of workers and to work intensification and a blurring of the boundaries between work and private life.

In 2016, EPSU and the CEMR employers' organisation in local and regional government agreed a joint framework on well-being at work which recognised that the digitalisation of public services would: "demand new skills and competences. In order to adapt to the changes and to preserve and develop the quality of services, it is essential that we continuously develop new skills for new roles and jobs. Greater take-up of training and life-long learning, including both 'on the job' learning as well as education of all workers and managers, must be a common objective."

Digitalisation has been able to help mitigate some of the challenges created by the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, it has enabled high levels of remote working for those able to carry out their work in this way. It is expected that once the pandemic is over, levels of remote working will continue to be higher than was previously the case, and trade unions will need to engage with the challenges that this may create.

Overall, digitalisation and new technologies bring both threats and opportunities to public services and it is therefore vital that trade union representatives are aware of this: it is important that trade unions are able to develop strategies on how to mitigate the potential threats and to take advantage of the opportunities offered by digitalisation.

Who is this toolkit for?

This toolkit is for trade union representatives at the workplace, shop stewards and works council members. It aims to give them advice and guidance on the challenges of digitalisation and the introduction of new technology and what steps they can take, through

collective bargaining and social dialogue, to respond to these challenges and to mitigate the potential negative effects on workers.

It is intended to help trade union representatives to raise their own awareness of the key issues related to digitalisation, to advise and support workers, and enter into a dialogue and negotiate with employers on the subject of digitalisation.

What is in this toolkit?

This toolkit is made up of sections that address the issue of digitalisation and its impacts in the following areas:

- Information and consultation, social dialogue and collective bargaining
- Restructuring and jobs
- Skills and training
- Health and safety, including psychosocial risks
- Working time, work-life balance and the right to disconnect
- Monitoring and surveillance
- Data privacy
- Artificial intelligence
- Telework.

How should this toolkit be used?

This toolkit sets out the main challenges and potential impacts of digitalisation and the introduction of new technology in workplaces so as to raise understanding of these issues among trade union representatives. After outlining the background, each section contains suggested steps for defining the main issues in individual workplaces and on the types of action that could be taken by trade union representatives in order to engage with the employer and mitigate any potentially negative effects of digitalisation for workers.

This toolkit can be used as a stand-alone resource or as support for a training course. It will be more effective if it forms part of a broader trade union strategy on the response to digitalisation and the introduction of new technology.

INFORMATION AND CONSULTATION, SOCIAL DIALOGUE AND COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

Collective bargaining and social dialogue are key channels that public sector trade unions can use to maintain and improve working conditions in the context of the digital transformation of public services. Most specifically, collective bargaining and social dialogue can develop frameworks for the digitalisation of public services that address the protection of health, safety and working conditions.

As the framework of actions agreed in the European social dialogue for the electricity sector states: “...social dialogue is crucial for the social partners at all levels (European, national, sectoral and company level) in anticipation of the change that the digitalised electricity sector brings.”

Collective bargaining and social dialogue can also contribute to:

- regulating the introduction of new technologies at the workplace;
- anticipating possible adverse effects on workers; and
- ensuring that workers benefit from the opportunities provided by digitalisation.

Digitalisation can drive major restructuring at work and where this is not fully regulated through social dialogue and collective bargaining, trade unions can still resort to their basic rights to information and consultation to ensure that they have some say in how the changes are implemented.

Digitalisation can have an impact on how information and consultation rights are applied in practice with an increase in the number of workers who may be geographically dispersed due to remote and/or atypical working. There is also a risk that a more dispersed workforce may lead to a weakening of trade union membership and bargaining power.

Defining the issues

- How can trade union membership and bargaining power be supported in a digital world?
- How can information and consultation rights, including those of remote workers, be supported?

Taking trade union action at the workplace

- Make sure that digitalisation is a standing item on regular information and consultation meetings with the employer
- Hold regular meetings, both internally and with the employer, to specifically discuss key issues and progress with actions relating to digitalisation

- Make sure that all details of remote workers are updated and that they are included in all information and consultation communications

The new cross-sector social partners' agreement on digitalisation contains information in relation to the process through which discussions on digitalisation and the introduction of new technology can be carried out. This is based on consensus between employers and trade unions and focuses on making the most of the opportunities afforded by digitalisation and preventing and minimising the risks for both employers and workers.

It is important that the agreement underlines that: "Workers.' representatives will be provided with such facilities and information as necessary to effectively engage in the different stages of the process".

European social partners' autonomous agreement on digitalisation, June 2020

How this can help trade unions

The overall aim of this agreement is to achieve a consensual transition to a digital economy by a successful integration of digital technologies at the workplace and by reaping the opportunities as well as preventing and minimising the risks for both workers and employers and to ensure the best possible outcome for both employers and workers.

The agreement provides for a four-stage partnership process between employers and workers' representatives:

- **Joint exploration/preparation/underpinning**, to openly discuss the opportunities and challenges/risks of digitalisation, their impact at the workplace and possible actions and solutions.
- **Joint mapping/regular assessment/analysis**, to assess benefits and opportunities (how successful integration of digital technology can benefit the workers and the enterprise) and the challenges and risks.
- **Joint overview of situation and adoption of strategies for digital transformation**, based on understanding the opportunities, risks and challenges and agree on digital strategies and goals.
- **Adoption of appropriate measures/actions.**
- **Regular joint monitoring / follow-up, learning, evaluation.**

Joint engagement should cover the following topics, which are impacted by the digitalisation: work content, skills, employment terms and conditions, work-life balance, work environment, health and safety, work relations, and work organisation.

The agreement contains four main sections, each exploring a specific area and containing relevant measures to be included in discussions around these issues. These four areas are:

- Digital skills and securing employment
- Modalities of connecting and disconnecting
- Artificial Intelligence (AI) and guaranteeing the human in control principle
- Respect of human dignity and surveillance.

RESTRUCTURING AND JOBS

Digitalisation and the introduction of new technological processes can result in restructuring of work organisation and job losses. There are certain jobs that are more at risk of elimination due to automation, such as low-skilled clerical and administrative jobs and those with non-client-facing roles. However, duties within existing job roles may be changed as may job profiles and job descriptions.

The European cross-sector agreement on digitalisation underlines that: “An objective of digital transformation strategies is avoiding jobs losses as well as creating new opportunities, including by looking into re-design of jobs. Strategies should ensure that both the enterprise and the workers benefit from the introduction of digital technology, e.g. working conditions, innovation, productivity and share of productivity gains, business continuity, employability.”

Defining the issues

- Is restructuring taking place in your organisation due to the introduction of new technology?
- Are jobs being lost as a result of this restructuring?
- Is job content being changed as a result of the introduction of new technology?

Taking trade union action at the workplace

- Examine the potential redeployment of redundant workers in new roles, with the support of training and skills development
- Ensure that changing job content is reflected in new job profiles and job descriptions, with increased levels of pay to reflect extra duties
- Assess the need for training and development available to help workers whose jobs have changed
- Engage with the employer to develop a plan to support redundant workers and those whose jobs and tasks have changed. This may be possible in the context of statutory information and consultation processes in the case of collective redundancies

SKILLS AND TRAINING

Training and skills development is crucial in the context of the digitalisation of public services. New skills and competence needs are developing and more simple tasks and activities are likely to be substituted by machines. Vocational education, training and skills development is therefore a key means of ensuring that a large number of workers are not left behind. Lifelong learning will ensure that digital skills are updated on a regular basis. The EU-level social partners in the electricity sector have agreed a framework of actions on digitalisation in their sector, which sets out a number of points in relation to skills development. This framework focuses on:

- 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, together with steps to ensure mobile and transferable skills in the electricity sector; and
- Launching a follow-up project focusing on building capacity to engage in effective skills partnerships with vocational education and training (VET) providers, while maintaining intelligence on employment trends.

The box below contains details of the digital champions initiative in the UK, which aims to support workers to learn new digital skills, focusing on basic digital skills.

Unison digital champions initiative

The Unison public services union in UK developed a [digital champions initiative](#) based on trained trade union volunteers who can support colleagues to learn new digital skills, gain digital confidence and overcome barriers to getting digitally active in the workplace. It is particularly targeted at those who are experiencing digital change in the workplace and who have low levels of digital skills. It is financed by the Union Learning Fund (funded by the UK government) and organised through the UK Digital Champions Network

The tasks of digital champions include:

- Collecting information about digital competences in workplaces in order to understand learning needs
- Showing staff how to use the staff intranet
- Delivering short digital learning courses
- Organising drop-ins to help staff with specific problems

“Since becoming a Digital Champion, I have been able to support my colleagues and customers with confidence. Supporting learners gives me great satisfaction, especially when learners do not think they can use digital and I watch them grow with confidence and eagerness to learn more.” – Linda Slasor, Union Learning Rep and Digital Champion, Newcastle City Council Branch

Defining the issues

- Has job content changed and/or have new jobs been created as a result of digitalisation or the introduction of new technology in your workplace?
- Has this created a need for new digital skills in your workplace?
- Do existing workers have these skills?

Taking trade union action at the workplace

- Record the new skills that are needed in your workplace
- Can you identify any digital skills gaps, in relation to basic digital skills and specific digital skills? If so, make a list of them
- Identify training already on offer. Can it be adapted or extended to fill these gaps?
- Engage with the employer to:
 - Ensure a basic right to learning and training
 - Address specific skills gaps with training
 - Put into place training to ensure that all workers have basic and specific digital skills
 - Reclassify, where necessary, pay groups according to new digital tasks and job profile
 - Integrate digital training into general organisational training
 - Monitor the situation on an ongoing basis to ensure that workers have the right skills to respond to the introduction of digitalisation
- Communicate regularly with workers in order to hear and collect their concerns
- Set up regular meetings with the employer to discuss ongoing issues related to skills development

HEALTH AND SAFETY, INCLUDING PSYCHOSOCIAL RISKS

Digitalisation can have series implications for workers' health and safety, such as:

- stress and burn-out as a result of strains related to ICT-based mobile work
- extensive availability,
- an increase in time pressure, and
- the introduction of new tasks.

Digitalisation for many workers is linked to either potential or existing changes in the individual work environment, resulting in increased insecurity, new duties or workload, and job intensification.

Physical risks include ergonomic concerns, particularly in relation to screen work. As in many countries, trade unions and worker representation bodies play a role in workplace or sector-based health and safety issues, the topic should be regarded as a key field of activities for trade unions.

Defining the issues

- Are workers suffering from **physical health and safety issues** that are related to the introduction of new technology, such as:
 - Musculoskeletal disorders
 - Eye strain
 - Other factors relating to a change in job content (e.g. weight gain/heart disease resulting from a more sedentary job)
- Are workers suffering from **psychosocial risks**, such as:
 - Stress due to:
 - Working to tight deadlines
 - Blurring work and home life
 - Being always contactable
 - Social isolation due to:
 - Working from home
 - Not working with other colleagues in a team

Taking trade union action at the workplace

- Evaluate changing jobs and job content in order to identify potential physical and psychosocial risks
- Undertake regular checks and maintenance of equipment
- Secure organisational support for eye tests and other relevant health checks
- Conduct ergonomic assessment of workstations and equipment, including those at home if feasible
- Engage with the employer to ensure that systems and procedures support workers who may be struggling
- Secure access to emotional support for workers, either internal or through an external provider

- Engage with the employer to secure backing for healthy workplace initiatives, such as healthy eating, exercise, health awareness

The box below contains a summary of a model agreement drawn up by the German service sector trade union ver.di, which is intended to serve as a guide for negotiators when engaging with the introduction and implementation of new technology.

Germany: ver.di model agreement on e-government to serve as a guide for negotiators

This [agreement](#) was drawn up by the German service sector trade union ver.di, which organises public and private-sector workers. It is intended to serve as a guide for negotiators in the area of digitalisation. The main points of the agreement are as follows:

- The workforce should be informed in good time about the introduction of any new technology and worker representatives should be involved in the implementation of new technological systems
- Training should be offered to staff where necessary, in order to enable them to work effectively with the new technology
- All work involving the use of screens and software should comply with relevant legislation and collectively-agreed provisions. Any changes should be made in consultation with trained ergonomic experts
- Ergonomic considerations should be taken into consideration in the acquisition, development and use of software systems
- All new jobs or jobs that have been substantially altered should be subject to a risk assessment that covers the physical and psychosocial aspects of the job. Psychosocial risks should be assessed every two years
- Workers have the right to receive regular instructions on how to minimise health and safety risks at work, particularly in the case of ergonomic considerations relating to the use of screens

WORKING TIME, WORK-LIFE BALANCE, RIGHT TO DISCONNECT

Digitalisation has brought many aspects related to working time back onto the agenda of collective bargaining. These include the potential for working time reduction due to automation and rationalisation, the regulation of ICT-related work at home or outside normal working time, availability, monitoring and documentation of working time, maximum hours and remuneration. Digitalisation can also contribute to increasing the blurring of the boundary between work and private life.

In November 2019, the Social Dialogue Committee for central government administrations approved guidelines for a checklist for improving work-life balance. It states that it is important to set reasonable workloads and distribute tasks in a balanced manner and to be aware that digitalisation processes can create information, work and social overload. It is also important not to delay in tackling excessive workloads and not to neglect the pile-on effect of work, especially aided by digital tools.

The checklist also underlined that: “Measures to manage the negative impact of the digitalization processes on the work/life balance of employees should ...be jointly addressed by public employers and workers' trade union representatives through collective bargaining or other forms of social dialogue in line with the relevant legal framework.”

Digitalisation can provide opportunities and added value for workers if facilitating framework conditions and rules are in place. At the same time, there is evidence that digitalisation can worsen the situation of workers if regulation is not in place or if rules in areas such as working outside normal working hours, the right to disconnect and fair digital telework are not defined.

Defining the issues

Are workers in your organisation dealing with any issues in relation to:

- Working time reduction or reorganisation
- Working excess hours
- Monitoring of working time
- Requirement to be constantly available

Taking trade union action at the workplace

- Draw up a list of issues to be addressed in relation to the effects of digitalisation on working time
- Engage with the employer to gain assurances on:
- Limits on maximum working time
- A framework or policy around working time organisation
- Guarantees on the monitoring of working time

- Guaranteeing the right to disconnect:
- What are the needs of the workers?
- Is there a need to place limits on worker availability? Bearing in mind that individual needs may differ

The box below contains the main points of an agreement on quality of life at the French public employment services, Pôle Emploi. It puts into place boundaries around working time and enshrines the principle of the right to disconnect.

Agreement on quality of life at work at Pôle Emploi, France

This agreement, which aims to improve the quality of working life for Pôle Emploi workers, contains the following main provisions:

- An automated email message will be sent in the case of absence of more than 5 days, noting that the email will not be answered
- Dedicated time for dealing with email backlog upon a worker's return to work
- Enshrinement of the right to disconnect outside working hours
- The putting into place of controls on emails sent outside of working hours (from 8pm to 7am)
- A clause stating that, except in cases of force majeure, workers cannot be contacted and must not be sent personal messages (including on external networks) outside working hours and during holidays.
- Workers cannot be sanctioned for having made use of their right to disconnect in the terms defined by this agreement.

[The impact of digitalisation on job quality in European public services. The case of homecare and employment service workers](#)

MONITORING AND SURVEILLANCE

New technology increasingly enables employers to monitor and carry out surveillance on their workers by using equipment such as cameras, CCTV, video surveillance, keystroke technology, online presence monitoring or monitoring of online activities. Online systems, to which employees are connected via their computers, now often build in icons showing whether an employee is connected to the system or how long they have been absent. This can shift significant control to the employer, in terms of the pace and intensity of work.

Defining the issues

- What types of monitoring and surveillance of workers is in place in your organisation?
- Is this monitoring and surveillance causing problems for workers in relation to the pace or intensity of work?

Taking trade union action at the workplace

Engage with the employer on the introduction and use of any planned new technology in order to discuss issues relating to worker surveillance

- Ensure that workers are aware of any planned or actual surveillance by employers
- Make sure that the purpose of the surveillance is clear
- Make sure that surveillance is not extended to non-working areas such as changing rooms, staff rooms and toilets

The box below contains details of an agreement reached between the employer and trade unions at DHL in the UK on the use of forward-facing cameras.

UK: Agreement on CCTV, forward-facing cameras

In the UK, the courier company DHL took a decision to install forward-facing cameras to all their insured fleet vehicles, and an agreement on their use was reached with the trade union DHL. The purpose and business case for the cameras was to: make DHL a safer place to work for its drivers; learn more from incidents or near misses to reduce the risk in future; reduce the cost of vehicle insurance; and reduce the cost of third-party claims by defending vexatious claims against DHL drivers.

The cameras can also be triggered by the drivers to record incidents that drivers may find themselves in, to assist with training or insurance claims. The agreement was jointly agreed with the staff side trade unions and states that the forward-facing cameras are not to be used for routine monitoring and as a tool to discipline drivers.

[UNISON Guidance on Monitoring and Surveillance at Work](#), 2017

DATA PRIVACY

Digitalisation enables the creation and storage of a large amount of data, including personal data relating to workers. It creates new digital tools that gather and analyse data on worker performance, location, activities and further personal data. By contrast, the legal frameworks of personnel data protection at national level tend to lag behind. In most countries there is relatively little involvement of workers in data protection practices at organisational level.

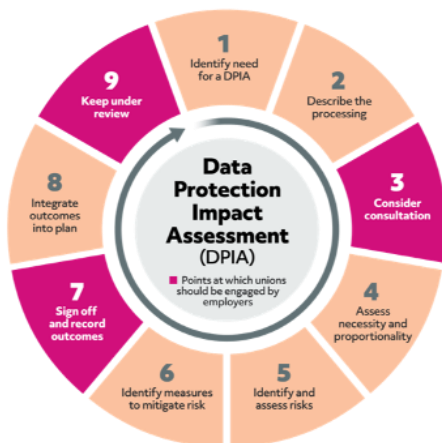
In addition to this, in the public services, the involvement of private contractors means that private companies may be collecting and storing data about workers. This data needs to be managed correctly and therefore it is important to engage with the employer on issues and processes relating to data processing, use and storage. GDPR rules exist in all EU Member States and trade unions can therefore use these as a starting point when engaging with the employers on data protection issues.

Defining the issues

- What types of data about workers are being collected by your employer?
- Who is collecting the data – are external contractors involved?
- What processes are in place in relation to the use and storage of this data?
- Do the organisation’s data collection and storage procedures comply with national GDPR legislation?
- What are workers’ information rights in relation to the data held about them?

Taking trade union action at the workplace

- Engage with the employer to gain agreement on:
 - Collection and storage of data
 - Clarity on what the data is being used for
 - Data security, if data is being handled by private companies



The [Prospect](#) trade union in the UK is developing tools to help its representatives to use GDPR and Data Protection Impact Assessments (DPIAs) to bring transparency over how workers’ data is being used. For details, see the figure below.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Examples of artificial intelligence (AI) can be found in facilities (smart grids and meters); transport (mobility apps or mobility as a service, covering whole journeys using different types of transportation); and health and social care (eHealth). There are also examples across public services in areas such as process automation, machine learning and algorithm-based decision-making.

The European cross-sector agreement on digitalisation says:

Whereas AI systems and solutions have the valuable potential to increase the productivity of the enterprise and the well-being of the workforce and a better allocation of tasks between humans, between different parts of the enterprise, and between machines and humans, it is also important to make sure that AI systems and solutions do not jeopardise but augment human involvement and capacities at work.

The use of AI can significantly improve work-related processes and increase efficiency, benefitting both the employer and workers. It can also be used to enhance workers' skills and performance. However, care needs to be taken to ensure that the introduction and use of AI does not disadvantage workers in terms of:

- Increasing the pace of work
- Changing the organisation of work
- Altering job content
- Taking any significant decision-making away from workers and their representatives
- Increasing the risk of discrimination as a result of the use of AI, in areas such as recruitment or promotion.

Defining the issues

- Has your organisation introduced AI in any way? For example algorithms to organise certain tasks
- Is this causing problems for workers in terms of pace of work, content of tasks, organisation of work?

Taking trade union action at the workplace

- Engage with the employer to discuss the nature of the AI processes in the workplace
- Seek clarity on the effects of AI on workforce planning
- Seek assurances from the employer that it will address any detrimental effect on workers.

TELEWORK

Digitalisation is a great enabler of teleworking, which is based on arrangements enabling workers to work remotely from the normal place of work. This is not a new phenomenon, but teleworking has been greatly increased during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Teleworking can introduce significant levels of flexibility for workers, in terms of working time, work organisation and place of work. It can also increase the reconciliation of work with private life by reducing the length of commuting and enabling more flexibility in the organisation of the working day.

However, there are issues around:

- Social isolation
- Blurring of the boundaries between work and private life
- Working excessive hours
- Health and safety issues related to the ergonomic design of workstations.

Defining the issues

- Are workers working remotely or at home on a regular basis?
- Has this number increased in recent years?
- How has the COVID-19 pandemic affected remote working?
- Are there issues around working time, social isolation, health and safety?
- Do workers have the appropriate tools to carry out remote working?

Taking trade union action at the workplace

- Conduct a survey of remote workers in order to uncover challenges related to teleworking
- Insist on the enforcement of statutory working time limits. Arrangements on time off in lieu (TOIL) could also be put into place to compensate for extra hours up to the statutory limit
- Ensure that home workstations are ergonomically appropriate
- Engage with the employer about equipment for remote workers. Is it possible to include this in a collective agreement?
- Put into place team-building exercises so that team working does not suffer

In Spain, the FSC-CCOO and FeSP-UGT public service federations have recently signed a new agreement on telework, covering 2.5 million public sector employees. The agreement includes basic principles that telework arrangements should be voluntary and reversible and subject to key provisions relating to health and safety, equality, transparency and objectivity.

The text states that teleworking must guarantee the provision of public services to citizens. It also guarantees individual and collective rights in the context of teleworking and also states that teleworking should not result in a reduction in employment or lead to privatisation or outsourcing.

Other important elements include a right to disconnect, data protection and the right to privacy. The trade unions have called for negotiations at various levels of government to follow quickly to ensure implementation of the agreement.

NEGOTIATING CHECKLIST

When negotiating and concluding agreements on the management of digitalisation or the introduction of new technology, it is important to bear the following general points in mind:

- Agreements should ensure that the introduction of new technology is transparent and inclusive
- The gender dimension should be considered in all agreements relating to new technology
- Vulnerable workers should be protected in all agreements relating to new technology
- Any potential negative effects of new technology and digitalisation should be mitigated
- There should be recognition for the acquisition of new skills or the alteration of job content
- The agreement should include provisions on the following subjects:
 - Information and consultation of workers
 - Digitalisation and restructuring
 - Skills and training
 - Health and safety, including psychosocial risks
 - Working time and work-life balance
 - The right to disconnect
 - Monitoring and surveillance
 - Data privacy
 - Use of Artificial Intelligence
 - Teleworking

The following two boxes contain details of two agreements on dealing with digital change in the workplace. The first is an agreement signed with the European Works Council at the French energy company ENGIE, setting out key principles relating to the introduction of new technology. The second is a proposal for an agreement on new technology, consisting of principles to underpin trade union negotiations.

Joint statement on digitalisation at ENGIE

This [joint statement](#) was signed by the European works council at the French energy company ENGIE and the company's senior management on 28 November 2019. The focus is to embrace digital change in the company but also ensure that employees are adequately supported.

A key issue is the maintenance and development of worker competences. Accordingly, all digitally-based projects will be evaluated in terms of their impact on jobs and competences. This will enable appropriate training to be put into place to support employees.

The joint statement says that any changes in the way that individuals work, for example by the introduction of remote working or hot-desking, should be assessed to ensure that this does not have a negative impact on employees.

The joint statement also notes that quality of working life, work-life balance and the right to disconnect should be ensured in the context of any changes resulting from digitalisation. Further, privacy and data protection issues should be taken into consideration at all times

Finally, the joint statement says that digital change projects should be discussed through the company's social dialogue channels at all levels of the company, in order to anticipate and mitigate any potential negative effects of digitalisation on working conditions and working life.

Unite (UK) proposal for an agreement on new technology

Principles to underpin negotiations

This text sets out the following points for trade union representatives to consider when negotiating with employers on the introduction and implementation of new technology. It was drawn up by the Unite trade union in the UK.

- The introduction and control of new technology will be based on agreement between the employer and the union
- Any resulting costs saving will be reinvested by the employer in order to promote more jobs
- New skills or responsibilities should be recognised through pay increases
- New technology will only be introduced if:
- The overall number of jobs is protected
- It does not benefit one group of workers at the expense of another
- Workers are ensured proper training
- Workers are compensated for new skills
- It does not include monitoring and/or surveillance without agreement
- There are clear and fair rules on any personal use
- There are no negative health and safety issues
- It will be introduced in a fair and equal manner
- Wherever relevant, new technology should be used to reduce working time, not pay, and to increase jobs

FURTHER READING

Degryse C. (2016) 'Digitalisation of the economy and its impact on labour markets', ETUI Working papers 2016.02, Brussels, ETUI: <https://www.etui.org/publications/working-papers/digitalisation-of-the-economy-and-its-impact-on-labour-markets>

EPSU: The impact of digitalisation on job quality in European public services. The case of homecare and employment service workers. *Ramón Peña-Casas, Dalila Ghailani and Stéphanie Coster*: <https://www.epsu.org/sites/default/files/article/files/FINAL%20REPORT%20EPSU%20DIGITALISATION%20-%20OSE%20June%202018.pdf>

EPSU (2016) EPSU Position Paper on Smart Public Services for a Digital Age, adopted by the EPSU Executive committee on 19 April 2016: <https://www.epsu.org/article/epsu-position-paper-smart-public-services-digital-age>

EPSU and CEMR (Council of European Municipalities and Regions)(2015) EPSU-CEMR Joint Declaration on the opportunities and challenges of digitalisation in local and regional administration: https://www.epsu.org/sites/default/files/article/files/Joint_Declaration_EN.pdf

ETUC (2017) Resolution on tackling new digital challenges to the world of labour, in particular crowdwork. ETUC Resolution adopted at the Executive Committee Meeting of 25-26 October 2017:

<https://www.etuc.org/en/document/etuc-resolution-tackling-new-digital-challenges-world-labour-particular-crowdwork>

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