



**2016/2271(INI)**

28.3.2017

# **OPINION**

of the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs

for the Committee on Industry, Research and Energy

on digitising European industry  
(2016/2271(INI))

Rapporteur: Marju Lauristin



## SUGGESTIONS

The Committee on Employment and Social Affairs calls on the Committee on Industry, Research and Energy, as the committee responsible, to incorporate the following suggestions into its motion for a resolution:

- A. whereas the information and communications technology (ICT) sector currently employs six million people in Europe; whereas 40 % of European workers have insufficient digital skills and encounter difficulties in lifelong learning; whereas education and training systems need to be adjusted and further strengthened to match the requirements of the digital labour market;
- B. whereas a large gender gap exists in employment and training in the ICT sector, with strong negative implications for equality in the labour market;
- C. whereas the digitisation of industry penetrates deeply into all parts of the sector, thereby increasing its competitiveness through the innovative and sustainable production of goods and services, driving economic growth and creating jobs and prosperity, but also posing challenges that require the active involvement of social partners and public authorities in pursuit of a fair digital transition;
- D. whereas the relative weight of industrial value-added and employment have been declining for decades, which has contributed to economic imbalances and has had negative effects on social and regional cohesion in some cases;
- E. whereas digitisation could lead to new networking relationships between people, groups, machines and systems, thereby engendering synergies between human creativity and artificial intelligence;
- F. whereas an average of 9 % of jobs are at high risk of being automated, while for another 25 % of jobs, half of the tasks will change significantly as a result of automation;
- G. whereas, according to the Commission, the demand for highly qualified digital workers continues to grow and, if adequate measures are not taken, could reach up to 756 000 unfilled positions by 2020, thereby jeopardising European growth and competitiveness; whereas current education and training systems should be revised, where necessary, in order to better meet the needs of the digital labour market and increase employment levels;
- H. whereas adjustments to technical developments and the resulting changes in the world of work represent an ongoing task which will occupy businesses, trade unions and policy makers for some time to come; whereas one of the key challenges will be to bring education and training systems in line with the needs of the digital labour market and to ensure that the digitisation of industry remains complementary to human work;
- I. Stresses that the digitisation of industry represents major challenges and opportunities, both in terms of the creation and loss of jobs and in the organisation of work; stresses that the digitisation of industry requires targeted responses from the Commission and the Member States, in consultation with the social partners, regarding employment, social, education and taxation policies, the enhancement of collective bargaining, as well as the

provision of up-to-date infrastructure; underlines that the digitisation of industry should be shaped so that it contributes to an improvement of working conditions;

2. Points out that new forms of work based on digitisation often uncouple the place of work from the enterprise, which poses a challenge regarding the applicable labour law, social protection and collective agreements, including the principle of equal treatment at the same workplace; is concerned about the increase of precarious work in the industrial field, including bogus self-employment and abusive zero-hour contracts; stresses that the protection of workers must be ensured equally across the board in the digital labour market;
3. Notes the strong regional differences as regards the digitisation of industry, which have consequences for jobs, productivity and growth, in particular for SMEs; notes that there is not only a regional, but also a social divide as regards digitisation, as well as differences between enterprises; calls, therefore, for efforts to be stepped up in developing inclusive digital infrastructures, including access to broadband, and in supporting SMEs, particularly in regions lagging behind; calls on the Union to support investments in the digital infrastructure and to make better use of European funds in this regard; highlights the need to promote universal access to the internet, including for disadvantaged groups and people living in rural areas;
4. Considers public digital innovation and open standards as a way to counter the concentration of digital knowledge in a few industrial companies, thus promoting balanced digital development across Member States;
5. Stresses the importance of networking and cooperation of the already established national digitisation initiatives such as Industrie 4.0, and calls for increased efforts to support regions and sectors currently lagging behind in order to ensure equal opportunities, and promote enhanced economic, social and territorial cohesion; stresses the potential of digital competence centres in supporting the digitisation of industry, increasing the competitiveness of existing companies and encouraging the creation of new ones;
6. Points out that digital transformation is a complex phenomenon that needs to be dealt with also at European level in order to avoid the fragmentation of the single market, and that the close cooperation with national and regional stakeholders is desired in this context;
7. Calls on the Commission and the Member States, in cooperation with the social partners, to regularly monitor and assess the impact of digitisation on the quality, number and types of jobs, as well as the demands for skills and qualifications, and to adjust related policies accordingly in order to protect workers' rights, guarantee fair competition and ensure that digitisation contributes to rising social and labour standards; points out that, owing to the digitisation of industry, the differential between the creation and loss of different types of jobs may have consequences on the financial sustainability of social security schemes, pension systems and unemployment insurance systems of the Member States; recalls that not all future jobs are equally affected by the digitisation of industry and that the importance of human interaction should not be underestimated;
8. Notes the effects that new business models based on digital technologies are having on the labour market as well as on the demand for digital skills of workers and service providers; stresses that digitisation offers opportunities to reshore manufacturing; calls on the

Commission and the Member States to develop reshoring strategies to promote growth and jobs in the Union;

9. Recalls the risk of digitisation aggravating the unequal distribution of wealth by deepening the digital divide such that it could split society, Member States and regions into those who are able to profit from increased digital productivity and those who are not; calls on the Commission and the Member States, therefore, to investigate possible ways of reducing inequalities rising through automation;
10. Recognises the opportunities and challenges related to the digitisation of industry; notes the positive effects that the digitisation of industry has as it increases flexible working arrangements that can create a better work-life balance, diversify choices through mobile telework, and allow people from rural and secluded areas to join the labour market (provided that they are equipped with the necessary infrastructure), thereby fostering economic growth; recognises, at the same time, that the digitisation-driven trend towards increased flexibility may increase the danger of unstable and precarious employment; stresses that new forms of work must not be used to circumvent existing labour and social legislation as regards the protection of workers' and consumer rights; points out that traditional industries and businesses in the platform economy must be on an equal footing;
11. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to gather data in order to monitor and evaluate the impact of digitisation on forms of employment and working conditions, and to undertake necessary initiatives in order to clarify the legal situation of platform workers, in particular by distinguishing between self-employed and employees, and adjust existing legislation where necessary to ensure that all jobs are properly covered by labour law; underlines that all workers have the same social rights enshrined in the Treaties and the European Charter of Fundamental Rights, which should be upheld, including the right of free movement, the freedom of association, the right to conclude collective agreements and the right to industrial action; stresses the need for a proportionate regulatory and administrative environment for the platform economy that takes the rights and obligations of all stakeholders into account;
12. Recalls that the European Court of Justice has defined the concept of 'worker' on the basis of an employment relationship characterised by certain criteria such as subordination, remuneration and the nature of work<sup>1</sup>; calls for legal certainty on what constitutes 'employment' in the digital labour market in order to ensure compliance with labour and social laws; states that all workers in the platform economy are either employed or self-employed, based on the primacy of facts, and should be classified accordingly, regardless of the contractual situation;
13. Is concerned about the significant divergences in the level of digital skills of workers within and between different Member States; stresses the need to bridge these gaps, which have negative impacts on development opportunities and the labour market;
14. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to ensure that digitisation of industry and the consequent increase in new forms of work will not be detrimental to social security contributions and that all contributions will be paid for all forms of work; notes that digital

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<sup>1</sup> See ECJ C 596/12, paragraph 17 and ECJ C 232/09, paragraph 39.

solutions can facilitate the collection of taxes and social security contributions;

15. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to involve the social partners regularly when adapting the regulatory framework for the digital economy; calls on the social partners to conclude collective agreements for the platform economy;
16. Calls on the Member States to ensure access to training in 21st century skills, in particular digital skills, critical thinking, problem solving, teamworking and using big data, in order to allow equal participation of all citizens in the digital single market; highlights, in this context, the importance of transversal competences, which enable workers to take informed decisions and develop a sense of initiative and self-awareness; stresses the role of employers in organising and funding suitable training that allows workers to enhance their digital skills and qualifications; draws particular attention to workers in jobs that are at risk of being eliminated as a result of the ongoing digitisation of industry;
17. Emphasises the importance of lifelong learning for all workers in the digital era; calls on the Commission and the Member States to ensure that workers losing their jobs have rapid access to retraining in digital skills, if they so wish; calls for a modernisation of social protection systems to reflect working and career patterns shaped by digitisation;
18. Highlights the importance of matching educational systems with the needs of the digital economy in order to provide students with relevant knowledge and skills; reiterates its call on the Commission and the Member States to promote interdisciplinary thinking in schools in order to satisfy the growing demand for digital and complementary skills; calls on the Member States to focus not only on the up-skilling of the workforce, but to promote teaching and interest in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM), as well as in entrepreneurial and relevant soft skills, from an early age; stresses that particular efforts must be made to overcome the severe gender gap in the ICT sector; calls on the Member States to involve social partners as well as education and training institutions in the development of skills strategies and occupational training programmes for the digital age;
19. Notes that the skills mismatch in the digital economy is not only about lacking skills, but also the result of poor working conditions, making some of the best-skilled workers choose to work elsewhere, and of poor management of human resources resulting in failures to fully tap into the skills and knowledge of the digital generation;
20. Welcomes the initiatives undertaken by the Commission with the aim of overcoming shortages of highly-qualified workers, such as the Digital Skills and Jobs Coalition; emphasises that lasting success in this area can only be achieved through the involvement of all relevant stakeholders, including social partners, education and training institutions, and NGOs;
21. Stresses that workers are not subsidiary to robotised production systems or digitised platforms, but play an important role in shaping their working environment and the digitisation of industry; highlights, therefore, the need to strengthen the right of consultation and participation in company matters, as well as the involvement of social partners at all levels to ensure a fair digital transition;
22. Stresses the need to identify and analyse both the positive effects stemming from the

digitisation of industry and the occupational health and safety risks they pose, including new psychological risks and the impact of robot-human interaction, so as to take appropriate measures where necessary; underlines the need to involve social partners in this context; points to the psychological and neurological effects of digitisation on employees, as constant accessibility presents a risk of work-related mental health problems such as burnout; advocates, therefore, that workers be entitled to a 'right to disconnect' outside agreed working hours;

23. Calls on the Commission and its agencies, in particular EU-OSHA, to examine the effects of digitisation, robotics and artificial intelligence on mental strain, and to make policy recommendations where necessary; points to the effects that constant supervision using digital techniques can have on the working environment and with regard to stress at work; stresses, in this context, that research clearly indicates that higher pressure and supervision tend to increase not performance but health risks, mistakes and accidents<sup>1</sup>;
24. Calls on the Member States to launch, together with the social partners, nation-wide consultations on the future of work and digitisation; believes that the Commission should play a key role in disseminating and coordinating such national initiatives;
25. Notes that the increasing use of new technologies and means of electronic communication at the workplace raises questions concerning workers' privacy and the new possibilities of monitoring and surveillance; stresses, therefore, the urgent need to discuss and develop better policy frameworks as regards data usage, processing, storage and ownership of employee-related data, in line with Regulation 2016/679, to prevent an infringement of workers' fundamental rights and ensure a right to data access for workers;
26. Notes the potential of digitisation with regard to the accessibility of social services and other public services, as well as the inclusion of persons with disabilities and persons with limited mobility in the labour market; stresses, in particular, the importance of teleworking in this context;
27. Notes the increase in platform work and expects it to spread further in the industrial sector, given the possibilities for decentralisation and flexibility afforded by digitisation; reiterates its concerns on the usage of platform work to circumvent tax legislation and worker rights, including minimum wages, health and safety obligations, maximum working times and the rights to social security in some cases; calls on the Commission and the Member States to develop a framework which ensures that platform workers enjoy the same rights as workers in the traditional economy, and that there is a level playing field when it comes to tax payments and social contributions of individuals and businesses with a view to safeguarding the long-term stability of public finances and social security systems.

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<sup>1</sup> European Agency for Safety and Health at Work: 'Work-related stress and risk assessment. A European campaign on risk assessment'; retrieved 14 June 2013 from <https://osha.europa.eu/en/surveys-and-statistics-osh/esener>.



## FINAL VOTE BY ROLL CALL IN COMMITTEE ASKED FOR OPINION

43	+
ALDE	Enrique Calvet Chambon, Robert Rochefort, Jasenko Selimovic, Yana Toom, Renate Weber
ECR	Anthea McIntyre; Jana Žitňanská
ENF	Dominique Martin, Joëlle Mélin
GUE/NGL	Tania González Peñas, Rina Ronja Kari, Patrick Le Hyaric, Neoklis Sylikiotis
EPP	Georges Bach, David Casa, Krzysztof Hetman, Ádám Kósa, Jérôme Lavrilleux, Jeroen Lenaers, Thomas Mann, Marek Plura, Sofia Ribeiro, Claude Rolin, Anne Sander, Sven Schulze, Michaela Šojdrová, Csaba Sógor, Romana Tomc
S&D	Maria Arena, Ole Christensen, Jan Keller, Marju Lauristin, Javi López, Alex Mayer, Emilian Pavel, Georgi Pirinski, Maria João Rodrigues, Joachim Schuster, Jutta Steinruck, Marita Ulvskog
Green/EFA	Jean Lambert, Terry Reintke, Tatjana Ždanoka

1	-
NI	Lampros Fountoulis

2	0
ENF	Mara Bizzotto
GUE/NGL	João Pimenta Lopes

**Key to symbols:**

- + : in favour
- : against
- 0 : abstention