

TRIPARTITE SOCIAL SUMMIT – 16 MARCH 2016

STATEMENT OF THE EUROPEAN SOCIAL PARTNERS ON DIGITALISATION

The ongoing digital revolution has the potential to lead to overall job creation. Some existing jobs and areas of activity will evolve; some jobs will disappear, and new activities will be created. Europe has a key role to play to ensure that this process leads to a positive, fair and sustainable result. The future of work, social security, taxation, creating a level playing field and fair digital economy for enterprises of all sizes and sectors and for workers, as well as scaling-up digital skills, are some of the most important challenges we have to tackle together.

Whether digitalisation will ultimately increase employment will depend on how successfully European enterprises adapt to technological developments, and on the extent to which the EU will be able to create a favourable policy and regulatory environment to safeguard the interests of enterprises and working people at the same time. Potential digital divides – whether generational, gender-based, regional or social – must be addressed. There are opportunities for better work-life balance and productivity which should be exploited. Moreover, ensuring that workers are given the chance to adapt and have access to new opportunities will be important to ensure broad support for digitalisation in society. That is why an inclusive societal approach is needed and regular exchanges between the European Commission and the social partners should be organised.

In this respect, it is important that the European Commission plans its employment policy agenda in a way that underpins the digital transformation of our economies and labour markets. It should, at the same time, aim to maximise quality employment opportunities that can arise from the digitalisation of our economies. Labour market policies should also aim to protect and re-skill / up-skill those who will be affected by digitalisation.

We invite the relevant Commissioners to work hand-in-hand with the social partners to define an ambitious and coherent EU agenda. We, the social partners, can play an important role to make sure that the agreed policies, most notably those related to labour markets and skills, make sense for enterprises and workers.

Together, public authorities and social partners at various levels need to assess how best to adapt skills policies, labour market regulations and institutions, as well as work organisation and information, consultation and participation procedures, in order to derive maximum benefits for all from the digital transformation. Most actions will need to be carried out at national, sectoral or workplace level. Social partners at all levels can contribute to making the digital revolution a success story for all European citizens and

enterprises, thereby strengthening the European social model and making it more sustainable. But the European Union should play a key coordination role.

In particular, ensuring people have the skills required in changing labour markets is fundamental to enabling Europeans to benefit from the new jobs that are being created. This challenge is more acute and immediate in the ICT sector, but digitalisation is creating new skills needs in all sectors. This means training for soft skills such as using the internet, creating a website or an app. But the harder skills of computer programming and coding are also required. While digital education should start right from primary education we must make sure that the older generations have access to skills updating and further education.

The European social partners agreed to work on skills needs in digital economies as part of the EU Social Dialogue Work Programme 2015-2017. We believe that digital skills should be a key priority in the upcoming EU skills agenda.
