

## JOINT DECLARATION BY ÖGB, UNI EUROPA, AND GPA-DJP ON DIGITALISATION, WORK, AND EMPLOYMENT IN THE EU

ÖGB, UNI Europa, and GPA-djp are convinced that a digital Europe can be a better Europe – a Europe in which growth brings higher quality jobs and promotes more social justice. But the benefits of digitalisation will not be reaped automatically. Targeted and balanced policies are called for to tap into the economic and social potentials the digital revolution entails.

Unfortunately, the European Commission's digital single market package in its current form lacks a meaningful social dimension. Without this dimension in the digital single market, the current EU digital agenda will not serve to create inclusive and sustainable growth in the long run.

ÖGB, UNI Europa, and GPA-djp call on the EU to create an agenda that turns digitalisation into a process that empowers workers and citizens and increases social cohesion and inclusiveness in the European social model. This requires that the following principles and considerations be taken into account:

**Digital technology must serve to empower workers and enrich work.** Using digital technologies can provide workers with a choice concerning when and where to carry out work. To take benefit from this, workers require clear rules respecting their work-life balance, as well as regulation that limits their availability outside of working time. Digital technologies should enrich working life, not degrade workers to assistants of 'the machine'. To this end, the introduction of digital technologies at work should be subject to meaningful social dialogue.

**A digital world of work requires high standards for the protection of personal employee data.** Digital technologies produce large amounts of data. Clear rules are required to establish what data employers may collect and analyse. Strict protection must be given to worker health data, contents of personal communications, and involvement in trade union activities. The EU General Data Protection Regulation should explicitly stipulate worker representation and co-determination rights in the field of employee data protection, and contain an 'opening clause' that allows national governments and the social partners to set standards going beyond EU minimum standards.

**Workers' rights and social protection for all in the digital age.** The digital transformation enables substantial increases in non-standard employment, for example in the form of freelancing and work in the so-called 'sharing economy'. Online 'crowdsourcing' platforms encourage a race to the bottom in terms of wages and working conditions. Affected workers have no access to collective bargaining, social dialogue, and standard social security. Ways must be created to establish co-determination, collective bargaining, and worker protection rights for the entire workforce, as well as social security systems that are open to all in the workforce. Such rights and protections must be effective and enforceable in situations where workers and employers are based in different countries.

**Education and training systems fit for the digital age.** The digital economy is characterised by rapid technological change and innovation. This requires frequent re-retraining measures that are equally accessible to workers in standard and non-standard forms of employment. To meet this challenge, all workers, including those in non-standard employment, must have an enforceable right to paid educational leave and effective training schemes. To ensure the cost of training is not borne by workers, both employers and governments must increase investment in education and training.

**Reinforcing the European social model in the face of digital change.** As digital change brings fundamental changes to EU labour markets, particular attention is required to preserve the European social model. Numerous sectors of the digital economy are dominated by a small number of big players, and the digital economy has a tendency to concentrate wealth while coring out medium-income jobs. This increases income inequality and threatens social cohesion. Moreover, current technological breakthroughs that enable the automation of work in more and more sectors cause many jobs to disappear. Increases in unemployment may be the result of this, which threatens the sustainability of social security systems and public services that are financed by the taxation of labour income. The EU and Member States must react to this and devise effective strategies against rising income inequality and potential hikes in unemployment in times of digital change. In preparing such strategies, consideration should be given to redistributing the productivity gains that digital automation may foster through tax systems and reducing working time.