



## Roundtable

# The impact of digitalisation on social dialogue in public services: key findings, cross-cutting analysis and recommendations

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# Why social dialogue is of paramount importance?

## To prevent from:

- the negative impacts of digitalization on jobs (cuts; technological unemployment) and quality of work (surveillance; “digital Taylorism”; precariousness; over-exploitation; social isolation).
- a further individualization, fragmentation, “disintermediation”, weakening of the collective actors and powers in the employment relationships

## To foster:

- a socially responsible and sustainable use of the new (digital) technologies
- the *humanization of work* (job enrichment; autonomy; wellbeing; satisfaction)
- the consensual anticipation of the change to benefit workers, citizens and communities, vulnerable groups, the societies as a whole

# The merits of DIGIQU@ALPUB and why comparative research is important

1. Because **international organizations** play today an unprecedented role in the transformation of the employment and social systems of each country (see the EU integration)
2. Because the **MNCs** have become a central subject in national economic and regulatory dynamics, capable of putting plants, systems and costs in competition with each other (see the social dumping)
3. Because **transnational actors and structures** are emerged to facilitate cross-border cooperation and solidarity (see the international T.U. organizations; sectoral social partners; EWC; TCAs)
4. Because if **the ongoing challenges are increasingly global**, also the trade unions' ability to cope with them, must become equally global (to get out off the "methodological nationalism"; U. Beck)

# Key Research Questions

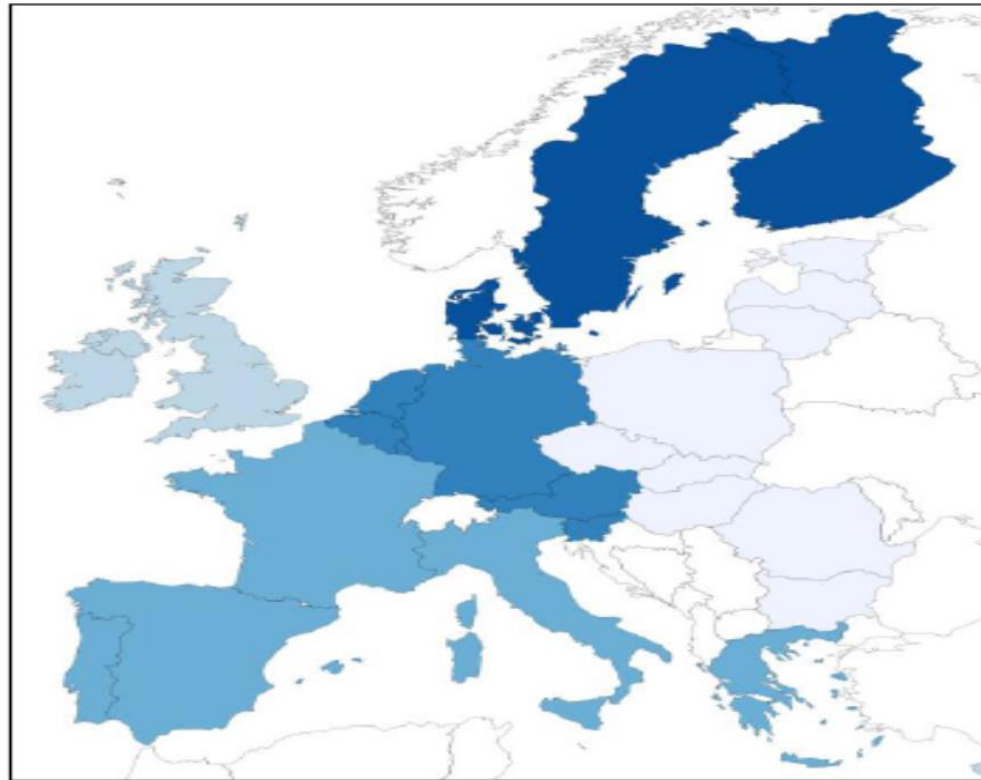
How the digital transformation and the industrial relations systems, at the national and sectoral level, are influencing each other?

To what extent the digitalisation is getting a growing role and importance in the public service sectors' social dialogue and collective bargaining?

Which are the trade unions approaches and priorities in order to cope better with the impact of digitalisation on working life and conditions?

Which recommendations to national and EU stakeholders?

# «Variety of capitalism» and of the industrial relations models



(a) national industrial relations systems

-  = Organised Corporatism
-  = Social Partnership
-  = State-centred
-  = Liberal
-  = Mixed

Source: Bechter, B., Brandl, B. and Meardi, G.

- Finland
- Denmark
- Germany
- France
- Spain
- Italy
- Poland
- Hungary



Drawn from DIME Online





# Some key indicators in the 8 Countries

Country	Statutory Minimum Wage (hourly 2023)	Extension mechanism	Predominant level in CB	CB coverage (2020)	Trade union density (2021)
Denmark	no	no	Sector	83%	64%
Finland	no	Frequently	Sector	89%	60%
Germany	12,00€	Limited	Sector	51%	15%
France	11,27€	Frequently	Mixed	98%	8%
Italy	no	no	Sector	98%	32%
Spain	6,55€	Frequently	Sector	80%	13%
Poland	4,30€	Rarely	Company	20%	12%
Hungary	3,41€	Rarely	Company individual	22%	8%

# Some key findings

- *«Digitalisation is a not homogenous process. The intensity and scope of the impacts vary significantly from one country, region, productive sector, company, population groups to the other»* (Spanish Report)
- Digitalization is going everywhere to change the contents of individual and collective labour relations and working conditions.
- There's virtually no single sector that is not impacted to some degree by digitalization.
- *«Digitalisation is a process not homogenous. The intensity and scope of the impacts vary significantly from one country, region, productive sector, company, population groups to the other»* (Spanish Report)
- Quite everywhere, limited or no explicit references at all to the digitalization in the texts of the collective agreements
- More widespread and influential role of tripartite consultation and framework guidance at peak and sectoral level. Informality and managers' unilateralism at company / workplace level, which consider the work organization as their own exclusive power
- Weight and relevance both of the national institutional frameworks and of the specific characteristic of the sectors, between private and public law and regulation

# National and sectoral cross-cutting findings

Nordic Countries	Key findings
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The 3 sectors apply digital tool differently, as different are the actors' purposes and attitudes</li><li>• Although all the sectors are impacted by digitalization, CLAs are still rather silent (especially in the public and health sectors)</li><li>• The SPs have a mutual trust about the possibility to properly handle with it through the established corporatist mechanisms of the Finnish industrial relations</li></ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Only very few aspects of digitalization are directly addressed in industry-wide CAs</li><li>• CB is just one of the various possibilities for the SPs to cope with the issue</li><li>• The importance of the tripartite and bipartite committees and practices</li><li>• The role of the workplace involvement, direct and indirect participation and cooperative discussions</li><li>• The mutual trust in the Danish Model of IRs to successfully cope with the challenges of the Fourth Industrial Revolution</li></ul>



## Continental Model

## Key findings



- The DT has had different histories, paths, speeds and dissemination processes in the 3 sectors, as well the SP strategies
- The influence of political decisions is very visible in the market structures, especially in the energy and in the hospital sectors, challenged by the privatisation processes
- Most of the agreements are concluded at company level, where the works councils have strong legal rights and powers.
- TUs unsatisfied in achieving national CLAs to cope with the digitalisation.
- TUs acknowledge the potential positive effects of digitalisation. Quality of services and working conditions should not be affected negatively.
- TUs stress the ‘common good’ character of the public services, but it cannot be left purely to market forces, at the expense of employees.
- The importance of participation in decision making at the early stage
- In general, the DT occurs as a consequence of top-down strategies, and there still seems to be no integrated comprehensive strategy.




- The 3 sectors share a common part of history, related to the predominant role of the State as employer. Differences for the most recent period, as effect of the privatization and liberalization, as in the case of the electricity, with repercussions in terms of CB activities and outcomes
- Digitalization is a relatively minor topic of national CB in all 3 sectors; at least in direct explicit terms
- More lively situation at decentralized level
- The growing weight of teleworking after the pandemic and new rules needed to cope with it consensually
- Different views among the T.U. Confederations; an optimist attitude prevalent (CFDT; FO) but with more worries and criticisms from CGT



- The DT is taking place with little SP involvement and T.U. are very critical for that
- CB deals with the regulation of specific matters that are modified by digitalisation.
- There are no 'digitalisation agreements' as such.
- The main issues relate to teleworking (public administration, hospitals, electricity), training (public administration, hospitals, electricity), time management and flexibility (electricity). Contrasts with the way in which the Covid-19 pandemic was tackled, when social dialogue had major results



- The SP are attempting to manage the impacts of ongoing changes through CB, joint examination and information and consultation at all levels
- Great difference between the (wealthy) electricity industry and the other two sectors, suffering of staff shortage and recent pay freeze in the past
- Right to the "smart working" in the new CLAs and guarantees for the employees (voluntary; right to disconnection and socialization; unchanged individual and union rights)
- The '*Statute of the Person*' in the electric sectors, national/sectoral and at ENEL (2022)

	Electricity	Public administration	Hospital & health sector
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Sector with better I.R. than in the rest of the private and public sectors</b></li> <li>• <b>90% CB coverage</b> in the 4 major companies and 40 sites, affiliated to one single</li> <li>• <b>CLAs do not deal with the DT yet</b></li> <li>• Law on the privacy</li> <li>• <b>T.U. no afraid of the D.T.:</b> more advantages than disadvantages</li> <li>• <b>No need to tackle the issue in CB,</b> whereas other topics prevail, such as wages and Green Transition</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Labour Code and legislation</b> rule most of the employment relations</li> <li>• <b>No national CB for civil servants;</b> only some agreement in local administrations</li> <li>• <b>CB coverage: 1%</b></li> <li>• <b>Strict limitations to the right to strike</b></li> <li>• <b>No CLAs and no focus on digitalization</b></li> <li>• Not in the top of the T.U. agenda, where there're other priorities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Statutory regulation</li> <li>• 2 ad-hoc tripartite teams into consultative SDC for no binding opinion on Governm. draft laws</li> <li>• <b>Sector CB is absent: coverage 2%. CB at company level</b></li> <li>• Not a priority for the social partners</li> <li>• <b>From moderate interest to disinterest, depending on the context.</b></li> </ul>





- The persistent and worsening weakness of the T.U.s, SD, and CB, with some of the lowest rates in the EU
- A peculiar mixture of State-driven unilateralism and a formal corporatism in tripartite forums, like the SDC, mostly consultative on draft legislation
- IR and CB significant only in the electricity sector (unionized and 90% coverage); no existing in the two PA sectors (1-2% coverage).
- Some SD practice of consultation and residual negotiations at workplace level
- In all 3 sectors, the impact of digitalization on working conditions is generally not subject to CB
- Scarce involvement of workers and T.U. in the technological change but also not a priority for them



- IR and CB significant only in the electricity sector; no existing in the two PA sectors.
- Positive T.U. attitudes. With the right preconditions, digitalization as an opportunity to connect disparate work organisations, with increasing job security and reducing stress and monotonous tasks at work. It also reduce potential human errors. Work has become easier and faster in many jobs.
- T.U. activities, in servicing and organizing, facilitated by the new digital tools for ICT. A more informed civil society through internet.
- In negative. Growing control and constant supervision over the workers moves and tasks. Premature burnout and high turnover. Longer working days; no separation between work and private life.
- The importance of the training courses, also online. The age divide as an issue for intergenerational solutions.
- The big problems with the Government policies about (also) labour and union rights. The exclusion of public workers from any real possibility to have a voice and a proper CB. The labour inspections dismantled. Poor attention on the risks for H&S (time exposure to the screens).

# RECOMMENDATIONS TO NATIONAL AND EU STAKEHOLDERS

Nordic Countries	Recommendations to national stakeholders	Recommendations to EU stakeholders
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A shared point of view is that digitalization and AI are above all, means of improving people's life</li> <li>• The problem with the jobs requiring face-to-face and not fungible relationships, as in the hospitals: the case of the nurses</li> <li>• The goal must be to search for models allowing citizens to contribute in society in times when the overall amount of paid work could decrease significantly</li> <li>• Basic income + new forms of reduction and repartition of the overall working time</li> <li>• Digital literacy as an essential preconditions to be not excluded from the positive aspects of the ongoing changes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More or less the same.</li> <li>• The task for the EU policy-makers is to try to find effective policies to also enrol those with low digital skills in life-long learning.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A shared point of view is that digitalization and AI are above all, means of improving people's life</li> <li>• Workers involvement and training for professional updating/upgrading as the key factors to cope successfully with the ongoing changes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• to prioritise training and skills upgrading,</li> <li>• to set clear priorities on where digitalisation can be most successful and efficient,</li> <li>• to create a framework for policies to ensure decent and human monitoring of work,</li> <li>• to focus on job quality &amp; H&amp;S</li> </ul>

## Continental Model

## Recommendations to national and EU stakeholders

### Germany

- The decoupling of work location and company through mobile working and home office has far-reaching effects on the work situation and the well-being of employees.
- Mental health is an increasing issue in the regulation of work due to work intensification.
- performance and behaviour control in connection with new forms of data collection and evaluation (Big Data, transparency issues).
- Shortage of qualified personnel is seen by trade unions and works councils today as the most important topic.
- digitalisation should be accompanied by training measures, new demands are being made on lifelong learning and continuing education.
- Participation of employees regarding digital transformation, should be strengthened.
- The general aim, objectives, targets and expected outcomes of the digital measures should be communicated with the employees and interest representatives in all stages from the beginning and accompanied with necessary qualification programs.
- Public sector should keep and develop own IT-competencies and not rely solely on external consultants or IT-service providers.
- Cyber security and data protection will remain as major issues in the course of digital transformation.

Southern Countries	Recommendations to national stakeholders	4Recommendations to EU stakeholders
<b>France</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To prevent from top-down/unilateral approaches</li> <li>• To avoid new forms of digital divide and discrimination, at work and in the use of the public services</li> <li>• More and better involvement/inclusion of citizens and workers</li> <li>• Harmonization in the use of the digital software</li> <li>• To invest digital literacy and training to enable workers to cope with the ICT changes</li> <li>• Productivity gains due to the D. must return to the workers in terms of shorter W.T., lighter workload and better work-life conciliation</li> <li>• To monitor and register new occupational diseases</li> <li>• CB must play a role beyond the scope of teleworking and right to disconnect</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To monitor any outsourcing and privatizations, following the recommendations contained in a recent EPSU report</li> </ul>
<b>Spain</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To foster I&amp;C rights</li> <li>• More internal democracy in all sectors and companies and workers direct participation to increase their active involvement and satisfaction at work</li> <li>• Training for T.U. reps and shop stewards</li> <li>• Mapping new psychophysical risks and new forms of work intensification or discriminatory gaps</li> <li>• Reduction of the W.T. and W/L conciliation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To continue to study and make progress to establish minimum requirements to ensure the proper implementation of new digital technologies in the workplace</li> </ul>
<b>Italy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Legal and Regulatory Framework;</li> <li>• Expertise</li> <li>• Training</li> <li>• Encourage joint implementation and monitoring of changes in the workplace</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regulatory frameworks within MS,</li> <li>• Funding for training</li> <li>• Research into digitalisation and its impact on work and society</li> </ul>

CEECs	Recommendations to national stakeholders	Recommendations to EU stakeholders
<b>Poland</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take very seriously the problems of the current weakness of the SPs, SD and CB.</li> <li>• Give the digital change a more prominent role in the SPs agenda, beyond teleworking</li> <li>• Make consultation more effective and less formal</li> <li>• Enable workers have to have a say in designing the new socio-technical systems they use at work</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make consultation more effective and less formal</li> <li>• Enable workers have to have a say in designing the new socio-technical systems they use at work</li> </ul>
<b>Hungary</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A preventive and effective bottom-up workers and T.U. involvement</li> <li>• Stakeholders should all be involved, at all levels, in the development of the DT. strategy</li> <li>• Risk assessment on the psych-mental protection, still uncovered issue</li> <li>• Invest in continuous training and re-skilling, in time of workforce aging</li> <li>• The importance of the financial support</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The involvement of the SP at all levels should be a key condition for EU funding. TU included into the national monitoring committees.</li> <li>• The issue of the costs and resources to facilitate DT; the importance of the EU funds</li> <li>• Cross-country cooperation important for DT-related cyber defence and for protecting workers' privacy</li> <li>• Harmonisation of online courses at EU level, through high-level e-learning and study visit</li> </ul>



# Some final comments and remarks

- The positive stance on digitalization in the **Nordic countries**, not causing controversies. The self-confidence in their system, widely based on informal cooperation, to successfully cope also with the new challenges
- In **Germany**, the DT as a consequence of top-down strategies, with better capacity at workplace level than in sectoral CLAs. The importance of the codetermination right. The issue of the data protection
- Not to hinder the process in the **Southern countries**. The importance of the framework agreements and a two-tier CB. The worries and critics about negative consequences. *“Deconstruct the current narrative on the injunction to adapt to digitalization, which does not come from natural evolution”* (CGT, F)
- **CEECs**: DT welcomed as an opportunity, if workforce will be highly and timely prepared. But the SD institutional framework is quite poor and the State unilateralism very strong
- Great **diversity of practices**, mostly related to the growing degree of decentralization
- The most important and common area of negotiation so far has been everywhere the **teleworking**
- New regulations are needed and innovative agreements searched for. **From reacting defensive to proactive involvement.**
- **“Trade Unionism 2.0”**. New ways for T.U. to reach wage-earners.
- The importance of investing in the **workers reps skills** in negotiating the technological change
- No much attention seems to be paid/addressed to the serious **generational and educational ICT divide** among citizens and users of the new digital platforms. As also for some citizens’ discontent about the over-use of teleworking, and its repercussion on frontline services, especially in the local public administrations. The risk for new forms of social exclusions.