Digital Transformation and Social Dialogue in Urban Public Transport in Europe

**Joint Recommendations
of the European Social Partners in Urban Public Transport
ETF-UITP**

The European Social Partners in Urban Public Transport (UPT) recognise that current digital and technological developments have an impact on society, urban mobility, as well as employment and work organisation in UPT companies. The digital transformation of UPT has already started and the challenge is to pro-actively shape this to the benefit of UPT companies and their employees.

The European Social Partners in UPT are committed to shaping the digital transformation of UPT by promoting social dialogue at all levels. They agree to use the digital transformation process as a lever to further develop high-quality mobility to better serve customers and reinforce the central role of public transport as the backbone for sustainable urban mobility services in line with the objectives of the European Green Deal.

The social partners are aware of the complexity of digital transformation in the urban public transport sector[1]. There are both risks and opportunities, and the UPT social partners agree that UPT's digital transformation must be based on a principle of just transition with the objective of securing both the future of companies and employment while preventing any negative effects on employment and working conditions. Strategies should ensure that both the enterprise and workers benefit from the introduction of digital technologies. For example, through better working conditions, new quality job opportunities in UPT companies, innovation, increases in productivity and a share of productivity gains, business continuity, and employability.

At the same time, European Social Partners agree that both well qualified staff as well as transparent, inclusive and clear rules and processes, which have been jointly agreed by UPT companies and workers' representatives, are essential for this transformation process.

The European Social Partners in UPT recommend the following principles and objectives to shape the digital transformation for the mutual benefit of all sides involved:

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[1] https://www.etf-europe.org/digital-transformation-and-social-dialogue-in-urban-public-transport/ -
https://www.uitp.org/publications/digital-transformation-and-social-dialogue-in-urban-public-transport/

Original authentic version

1. An inclusive and participatory approach to the digital transformation

A truly inclusive and participatory approach should form the basis of digital change in UPT companies. It is important to secure the active participation of all employees and their representatives from the beginning in order to realise the full potential of innovation processes.

Adopting such a participatory approach will increase the knowledge, understanding and motivation of the participants and help to decrease employee fears. The process should not be hasty or disruptive, and should consider any potential social impact or consequences it may have.

The different proposed stages of the process have been described in the cross-sector European Social Partner Framework Agreement[2] and encompass:
1. Joint exploration and preparation
2. Joint mapping and analysis
3. Joint overview of situation and adoption of strategies for digital transformation
4. Adoption of appropriate measures/actions
5. Regular joint monitoring, follow-up, and learning evaluation

UPT companies and workers representatives should develop a joint digital strategy, the objectives and implementation of which should be inclusive and non-discriminatory. Indeed, all measures accompanying digital transformation must be introduced in a way that avoids discrimination against workers on the basis of gender, age, sex or any other personal characteristics and equality trends.

2. Ensuring job security and skills within digital transformation

Ensuring future job security is in the mutual interest of both UPT workers and UPT companies, which benefit from the workforce's experience and skills. Digitalisation is likely to result in substantial changes to job profiles; some job profiles may be discontinued while new roles will be created. It is essential therefore that UPT companies reskill and upskill their workforce, so the right skillsets are in place as the digital transformation takes hold.

Setting the right framework conditions to support workers' employability by improving individual skillsets is an essential challenge for management. However, it also presupposes that employees are motivated to learn and are open to the changes necessary to work effectively with new technologies.

The following analysis and tools are relevant in delivering a successful re-skilling and up-skilling of the workforce. They should be made available through a joint approach between trade unions and management at national, regional or local level:

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[2] https://www.businesseurope.eu/publications/european-social-partners-framework-agreement-digitalisation
or https://resourcecentre.etuc.org/agreement/framework-agreement-digitalisation, pages 6/7

- the impact on employment of investments in digitalisation and automation technologies;
- the impact of digitalisation and automation on existing job profiles;
- whether new professions and/or job profiles will emerge;
- the existing skill sets in the company;
- the future skills requirements following investment in digitalisation;
- establishment of skills plans and training programs for 'lifelong learning',
- timely anticipation and counteraction of the potential risks for individuals or groups of workers.

Companies will offer opportunities to all current as well as new employees to participate in continuous (in-house or external) training programs for re-skilling, upskilling and retraining. This will enable employees to develop new skills and improve their employability while enabling them to keep pace with new technologies as well as changing work tasks. However, as stated in the UITP/ETF Joint statement on Vocational Education and Training (VET) for drivers (8 April 2014),[3] the European Social Partners are of the opinion that in general investment in initial and continuous training should be borne by the employers. The UPT Social Partners also wish to underline that professional training and lifelong learning is an act of societal responsibility, which will impact local and regional employment and should be supported with public funds. As a result, dialogue with national, regional, and local authorities should be in place to develop the necessary public financing or co-financing schemes.

3. Using digital transformation to improve working conditions and the work-life-balance

The European Social Partners agree that new digital technologies should be deployed in a way that prioritizes providing a high-quality customer-oriented service and improving working conditions while enabling the pursuit of sustainable and secure employment opportunities.

Digitalisation can improve work-life balance and offer more attractive working and employment conditions for employees. For example, digitalisation and automation can reduce physically hard, 'dirty' or monotonous work and thus also give more opportunities for women and other under-represented groups in UPT.

However, the use of digital tools and work devices also pose risks to occupational health and safety, increasing the potential for employees to experience stress and psychosocial risks. For example, through:
- an overload of information and distraction (e.g. badly designed drivers' assistance systems);

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[3] Press release: https://www.etf-europe.org/etf-and-uitp-unite-to-promote-the-continuous-training-of-professional-bus-drivers-in-urban-public-transport/ -
Full text: https://cms.uitp.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/The-implication-application-and-further-development-of-the-vocational-training-directive-200359EC.pdf

- an increase in work intensity and workload;
- permanent availability outside usual working hours, blurring private and working life.

It is the employer's duty to ensure the health and safety of workers in every aspect relating to work. As the digital transformation of UPT companies' progresses, and the variety of digital tools and work devices increases, health and safety policies should prioritise preserving mental health and tackling work-related stress. Regular risk assessment processes should be enforced, and a pro-active prevention policy introduced, in line with the existing regulatory framework.

A preventive working culture with clear and transparent rules and procedures is essential. These should be agreed jointly by management and workers' representatives for the working time and the organisation of work, including time-management and health protection. The right to disconnect and not be contactable after working hours accompanied by a no-blame culture are indispensable elements of such an agreement.

Furthermore, guaranteeing the control of humans over machines and AI is critical as automation of certain operational functions and the use of artificial intelligence technologies increases and becomes commonplace in UPT companies, for example in operations (driverless trains and buses, automated dispatching), maintenance (condition-based and predictive maintenance, self-ordering stock) or customer services (predictive passenger information, chat bots, marketing services).

Companies and trade unions should acknowledge and address "the potential tension between respect for human autonomy, prevention of harm, fairness and explicability of decisions.[4]"

4. Ensure data protection, privacy, and dignity

Sensitive information and the privacy of both employees and passengers must remain protected. The respective enforced regulatory framework has to be applied.

At the same time, the purpose of each technology deployed in UPT companies and the collection of data needs to be clearly defined. Digital tools have the potential to significantly increase the security and safety of UPT networks, benefiting both users and workers. They can support eco-friendly driving as well as improve customer service by offering real-time information.

But they can also raise the risk of compromising the dignity of the human being, in particular due to the increased potential for personal monitoring. This could result in a negative effect on working conditions and wellbeing at work.

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[4] https://www.businesseurope.eu/publications/european-social-partners-framework-agreement-digitalisation or https://resourcecentre.etuc.org/agreement/framework-agreement-digitalisation, page 11

The European Social Partners agree that the protection of sensitive employee data needs special attention. The collection of data and the use of surveillance systems (e.g. cameras inside stations and vehicles) must be fully transparent.

Such an arrangement should be subject to collective bargaining between management and trade unions and workers' representatives. The purpose should be clearly defined and communicated. In particular, the collection of data that can be used for personal monitoring of performance and behaviour must be specified among social partners. It must not be used for any other purpose.

Implementation of the Joint Recommendations and follow-up activities

These Joint Recommendations (JR) are part of the Work Program of the European Social Partners in UPT, UITP and ETF.

The signatory parties commit to disseminate the JR among their members and promote the implementation and application of JR.

The members of the signatory parties are encouraged to inform each other at sector and/or company level about the European level JR on 'digital transformation and social dialogue in the UPT sector' and establish a dialogue at the appropriate level, according to the recommendations. They will be surveyed by their European organisation about measures and initiatives one year after signing the JR.

The European Social Partners will draft a report three years after signature and review the JR if appropriate. For this purpose, they may envisage a joint project.

Signed on 18 March 2021

For ETF

Susanne Gällhagen
Chair of ETF UPT Committee

Mira Ball
Vice-chair, Urban Public Transport
European Social Dialogue

Sabine Trier
ETF Deputy General Secretary

For UITP

Ulrich Weber
Chair of UITP EU Committee

Benoît Juery
President, Urban Public Transport
European Social Dialogue

Thomas Avanzata
UITP Europe Senior Director

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