COVID-19: Virtual Free Movement of Workers

Perspective of the European Trade Unions

REPORT

European Economic
and Social Committee

COVID-19: Virtual Free Movement of Workers

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Workers' Group Research Report

Marie Zamecnikova

Abstract

The interrelation between telework and the COVID-19 pandemic has offered a completely new insight into the traditional organisation of work and led to the development of the phenomenon referred to as the 'new normal.' By focusing on the EU workforce, this thesis investigates how TICTM (Telework and Information and Communication Technology-based Mobile Work) has shaped their behaviour during COVID-19 from the point of view of European trade unions. This research contributes to the existing literature by arguing that the preparedness of individual member states played a crucial role in workers' trust in national government and the extent to which the European workforce was able to benefit from the TICTM during a chaotic, precarious and unpredictable period. A semi-quantitative approach was adopted using the constructivist grounded theory methodology to explore workers' experiences with TICTM, generating a model of TICTM factors shaping their behaviour based on participant's accounts. Eleven virtual interviews were conducted with European trade unionists, one e-mail interview with the European Trade Union Confederation's representative and sixty-five responses were obtained via survey. The model developed three theoretical codes: adaptation to the new normal, moral uncertainty, and digital movement.

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The literature support was provided from the EESC Library, where librarians conducted comprehensive research of available sources both online and in institutional libraries for this study. I highly recommend their services, and I would like to encourage future researchers to cooperate with the EESC library.

Last but not least, my relatives, friends and virtual friends who kept me motivated and were able to absorb my never-ending monologues around the digitalisation of employment.

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List of Abbreviations

ACT	**Anti-Crisis Shield**
COVID-19	**Coronavirus disease of 2019**
EEA	**European Economic Area**
EESC	**European Economic and Social Committee**
ETUC	**European Trade Union Confederation**
EU	**European Union**
Group II	**Workers' Group**
GT	**Grounded Theory**
ICT	**Information and Communication Technology**
MEP	**Member of the European Parliament**
TICTM	**Telework and ICT-based Mobile Work**

Country Codes

Country	Code
Austria	AT
Belgium	BE
Bulgaria	BG
Croatia	HR
Cyprus	CY
Czechia	CZ
Denmark	DK
Estonia	EE
Finland	FI
France	FR
Germany	DE
Greece	EL
Hungary	HU
Ireland	IE
Italy	IT
Latvia	LV
Lithuania	LT
Luxembourg	LU
Malta	MT
Netherlands	NL
Poland	PL
Portugal	PT
Romania	RO
Slovakia	SK
Slovenia	SI
Spain	ES
Sweden	SE

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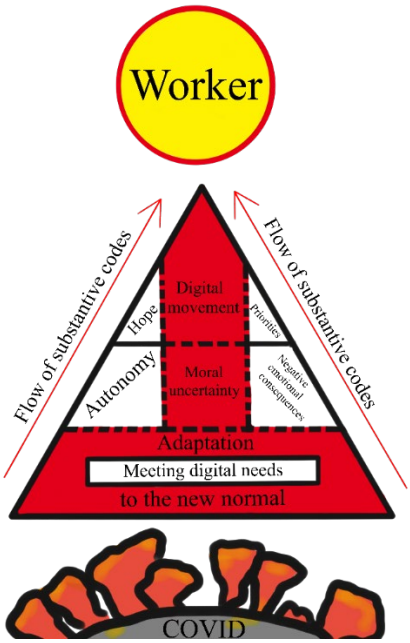
Executive Summary

The expansion of TICTM led many workers into uncertainty and chaos during the COVID-19 pandemic due to insufficient digital skills, inadequate digital infrastructure and fragmented digital strategies of member states. Even though we are experiencing the proliferation of digitalisation and a rapid pace of development of digital technologies, the trending evolution of TICTM was relatively constant, with around 3% of employees regularly making use of a virtual work organisation in the last decade. This figure fundamentally changed as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic ultimately reaching nearly 40% in the EU-27. Implementing mandatory TICTM measures whenever and wherever possible by member states revealed the insufficient level of digital skills among workers as they were obliged to adapt to the 'new normal'. However, human capital cannot be developed overnight, as was in the case of TICTM expansion. The basic digital skills of employees increased only by 2% since 2015. The correlation between human capital and TICTM was projected in workers' behaviours and emotions during the time period of precariousness and unpredictability. Therefore, the European trade unions played a crucial role as protectors and a vital vehicle of democratisation. This study focuses on the effects of TICTM on workers' behaviours during the COVID-19 pandemic from the perspective of European trade unions, highlighting their struggles in negotiations to ensure decent and quality TICTM.

Model of TICTM factors

This study elaborates primary data from 74 participants, including 73 participants from the trade unions and one from the ETUC, and created a model of the TICTM factors presented below. This Figure of Findings traces how TICTM has shaped workers' behaviours during the COVID-19 pandemic from the perspective of European trade unions. The fragmented decisions by governments over restrictions and measures throughout the EU influenced workers' well-being and engagement in society, as well as the extent to which they were able to benefit from TICTM. In most cases, neither companies nor governments could integrate the digital technologies necessary for undertaking remote work on a daily basis when COVID-19 hit. Additionally, the insufficient level of human capital and connectivity created an obstacle for workers when trying to adapt to the 'new normal'. Even though the freedom from the shackles of traditional employment models reinforced the workforce's autonomy, this self-determination was only possible if workers obtained sufficient digital skills to proceed with TICTM, allowing them to focus on their productivity and the balance between personal and professional life. As the European trade unions affiliated democratic values with undermining of working conditions during the pandemic, this study detected a relation between democracy and employees' digital skills. An above-average level human capital played an essential role in the workers' efficiency and work-life balance without experiencing enormous technological stress and anxiousness as the alternative to their livelihood in terms of TICTM was fulfilled, and therefore they felt more certain with national decisions during COVID-19. The restrictions and measures were usually taken for specific time periods in all member states, which consolidated a feeling of expectation to get back to the 'old normal' working arrangement. These decisions have been prolonged and changed many times, creating an unattainable paradigm. Therefore, the European trade unions invigorated their need to fight for the preservation of workers' rights and defend decent employment through the process of modernisation as safely and effectively as possible. All European trade unions agreed that digital rights are insufficient, which undermines working conditions and therefore democratic values of our society.

Figure of Findings: Model of the TICTM factors



Source: Author's own elaboration.

Findings

The adaptation to the new normal

This research reveals a substantial variation in the preparedness of member states in terms of TICTM given that workers had unequal access to digital means, digital training and the extent to which they could benefit overall from the digital strategy of their countries. This paper stresses that the readiness of countries can be measured by the level of digital skills, arguing that the more digitalised a country was prior to the pandemic, the more likely it was that workers started to telework as a result of COVID-19 and, therefore, the more societally resilient the member state was. This readiness was detected amongst Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Ireland, Luxembourg, Netherlands and Sweden, whereas Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Greece, Hungary, Latvia, Poland, Republic of Cyprus, Romania and Slovakia lacked this capability to adapt to the 'new normal'.

Moral uncertainty

The freedom from the shackles of traditional employment models reinforced workers' autonomous capability to benefit from the 'virtual free movement', enabling them to seek novel opportunities regardless of time and place. In this study, the European trade unions stressed that workers' feelings of uncertainty, chaos, precariousness and unpredictability were dependent on the average level digital skills in member states. Democratic values are key principles of trade unions because they strive for decent and quality work, and therefore for workforce's satisfaction. This study argues that the workforce's satisfaction and democratic values were also shaped by digital skills of employees because, in many cases, workers were left to their own devices and human capital was necessary for the implementation of TICTM. Workforces with a below-average level of digital skills could not focus on their efficiency or work-life balance and experienced enormous technological stress and anxiousness; they felt more doubtful about national decisions and restrictions during the pandemic.

Digital movement

Even though COVID-19 created a dichotomy between those prepared before the pandemic who were able to benefit and those who were not and were left behind, the trade unions tried to navigate their workforce towards modernisation as safely and effectively as possible, which invigorated their need to fight for the preservation of workers' rights and defend decent employment. This study contributes that

a uniform basis of digital rights at the EU level would support the normalisation of TICTM as an alternative to the traditional organisation of work, with an added value of decent and quality working conditions. Paradoxically, when the freedom of movement was restricted due to the COVID-19 pandemic in the whole Union, the workforce could, to some extent, enjoy the 'virtual free movement,' which depended on whether they were considered digitally overloaded or device-less. The governments' solution of equipping households by digital means that lack a basic understanding of its function is considered, in this study, as dangerous and ineffective if no further training was secured by social partners. Thus, social partners should pay special attention to continuous digital training and the education of workers if they want to increase societal resilience and enterprise continuity in the future.

Introduction

"Let's hope, we altogether can face this huge digital and pandemic challenge and survive as strong and representative trade union movement" (trade unionist from Portugal).

The Information Age has spread the word about the opportunities and challenges that the EU workforce undergo in the isolated workplaces due to enforced measures by individual member states during the COVID-19 pandemic (Eurofound, 2020d). The interrelation between telework and the COVID-19 pandemic has offered a completely new insight into the traditional organisation of work and has led to the development of the phenomenon referred to as the 'new normal' (AEI, 2020; Farrer, 2020; The Parliament Magazine, 2020; University of Pennsylvania, 2020; Wharton; BBC, 2020). Although some understand 'new normal' as the mass transition to the virtual work environment (AEI, 2020; The European Parliament Magazine, 2020; Wharton University of Pennsylvania, 2020), there are others who see it as a great potential for our future (BBC,2020; Farrer, 2020). This paper understands the 'new normal' as the turbulent period when the EU workforce had to change its work practices and behaviours to comply with measures implemented by their member states. During such a crisis, the workforce can be exploited, abused and their rights and working conditions can be undermined. Therefore, the European trade unions are seen as the vehicle for protection, fighting for the preservation of workers' rights and defending decent employment. Many elements of TICTM have already been researched, including its evolution and the emotional and physical consequences (Kaplan and Vega, 2015; Mann and Holdsworth, 2003; McIlvaine, 2019). The European trade unions' perspective on remote work is still unexplored since TICTM was an unpopular working method until the COVID-19 crisis began (Eurostat, 2020). This study examines how the EU workforce has been shaped by the virtual work environment during the COVID-19 pandemic from the perspective of the European trade union's representatives. In this study, TICTM refers to the socio-technical transition to a more approachable and diversified work organisation, regardless of time and place, which uses digital technologies (Eurofound, 2020c).

This study addresses the lack of in-depth investigation of the interrelation between TICTM and the COVID-19 pandemic from the perspective of European trade unions. Through the analysis of the research question '*How TICTM has shaped workers' behaviour during COVID-19 from the European trade unions*' *perspective?'*, this thesis intends to contribute to the substantive area of research by arguing that the preparedness of individual member states played a crucial role in workers' trust in national government and the extent to which the European workforce was able to benefit from the TICTM during a chaotic, precarious and unpredictable period. A constructivist grounded theory method, with the aim of developing a model of the TICTM factors shaping workers' behaviour during COVID-19, was used to explore the European trade unions' perspective.

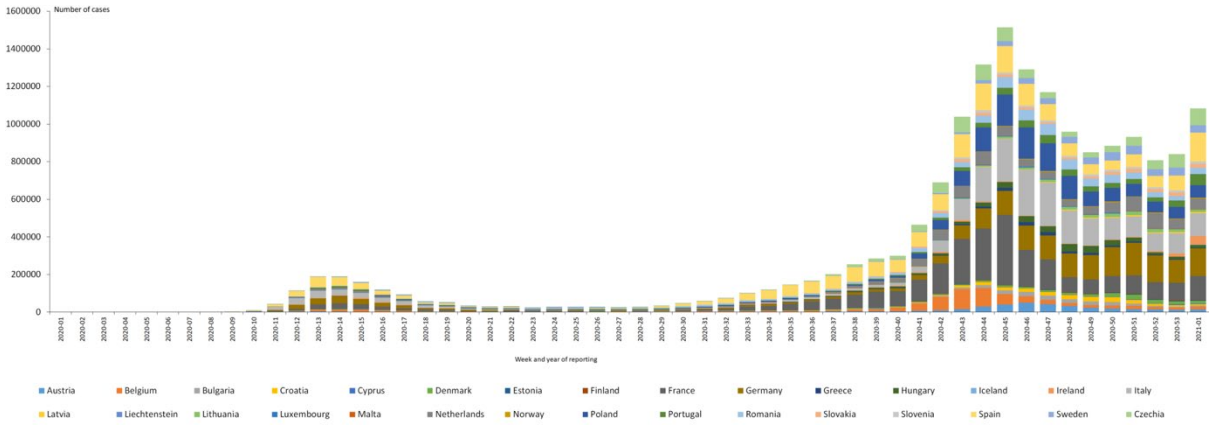
This paper contains of six chapters, including an introductory section. The second chapter discusses the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, TICTM and the role of trade unions. The methodology is developed in the third chapter, comprising of the approach to the theory of construction, the limits of research and data collection and analysis. In the fourth chapter, results are examined, accompanied by supporting literature. Chapter 5 discusses the contributions to the substantive research area, followed by the findings in Chapter 6 and conclusion in Chapter 7.

2. Context

2.1 Covid-19 Pandemic

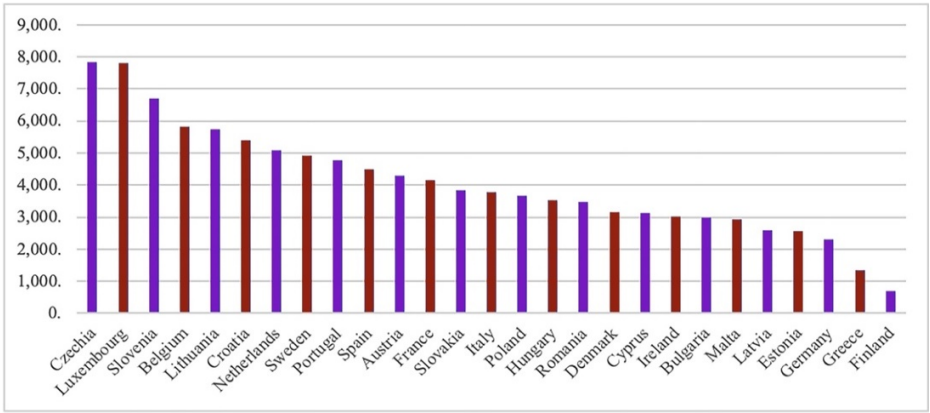
The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic is affecting all areas of our daily lives, creating significant economic strains and shaping the behaviour of civil society as a whole (Koley and Dhole, 2020). The pandemic is recognised as the uttermost health crisis in the last 100 years (Ahrendt, 2020). Although a *global war* against the coronavirus infection began in Wuhan, China in December 2019, the pandemic quickly reached to the EU at the beginning of the second quarter of 2020 (Reuters, 2020). Globalisation has played a significant role in the spread of the pandemic because ultimately, higher levels of interaction among people lead to increased usage of international airports and other means of transportation, allowing for a disease in one country to spread across the globe within a short period of time. The detailed, yearlong evolution of cases in EU/EEA countries can be observed in Figure 1. The proliferation of COVID-19 was accompanied by strict measures and restrictions, which affected not only workers, but also civil society; for example, social distancing, curfew, travel restrictions and mandatory teleworking. Each country implemented different strategies to combat the pandemic since no single strategy could be applied effectively to the entirety of the Union. Therefore, inconsistent measures shaped the unstable evolution of cases in individual countries. Figure 2 depicts the comparison of cases per 100 000 inhabitants in the EU-27 countries. Although we are still in the middle of a crisis, the pandemic has already defined a 'new normal' phenomenon for civil society. This paper understands the 'new normal' as the period when the EU workforce had to alter their work practices and behaviours to comply with the measures implemented by their country of employment.

Figure 1. COVID-19 situation for the EU/EEA, as of week 1, 2021



Source: ECDC, 2021.

Figure 2. COVID-19 cases per 100 000 inhabitants, EU-27 as of January 10, 2021



Source: Statista, 2021.

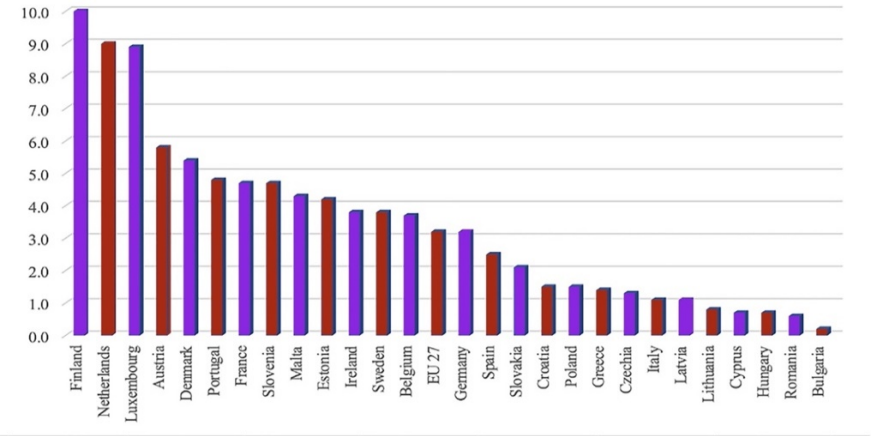
2.2 Telework and ICT-based Mobile Work

The new dynamic has been assigned to the work arrangement overnight and has placed the workforce inside the so-called digital world with new working practices and interconnections across the globe. According to Eurofound (2020c), *"TICTM is a work arrangement characterised by working from more than one place, enabled by ICT."* This study understands TICTM as the socio-technical transition of work organisation, which uses modern technologies (e.g., laptops, phones, platforms, application) to transform an employee's workplace into a more approachable, innovative, challenging and diversified environment. In other words, employee regularly conducts this type of work arrangement outside the employer's premises by using digital technologies (Eurofound and ILO, 2017). Although the 21st century has brought the proliferation of digital technologies, Figure 3 shows that the trending evolution of TICTM was relatively constant before 2020. Figure 4 presents the percentage of employees working remotely in EU-27 countries in 2019. According to Eurostat (2020), only 2,7% of EU-27 employees identified themselves as usually working from home in 2009 compared to 3,2% in 2019. However, the early estimates shown in Figure 5 predict that the TICTM share average increased to almost 40% in 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic (European Commission, 2020). Although this fast transition into the world of virtual work has reduced the need for rigid, functionally and geographically integrated work in the whole Union, it has also raised many questions about the protection of workers' rights as well as the standards for decent, quality work.

Figure 3. (%) Evolution of employees in TICTM from 2009 to 2019

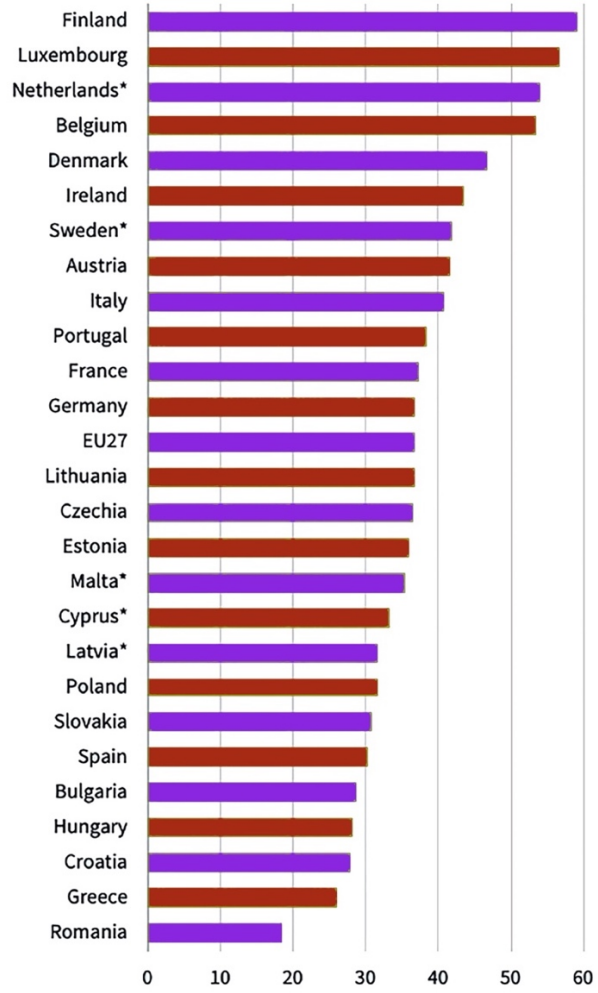
Source: Eurostat, 2020.

Figure 4. (%) Employees in TICTM, EU-27, 2019



Source: Eurostat, 2020.

Figure 5. (%) Proportion of workers who started teleworking as a result of COVID-19 by country



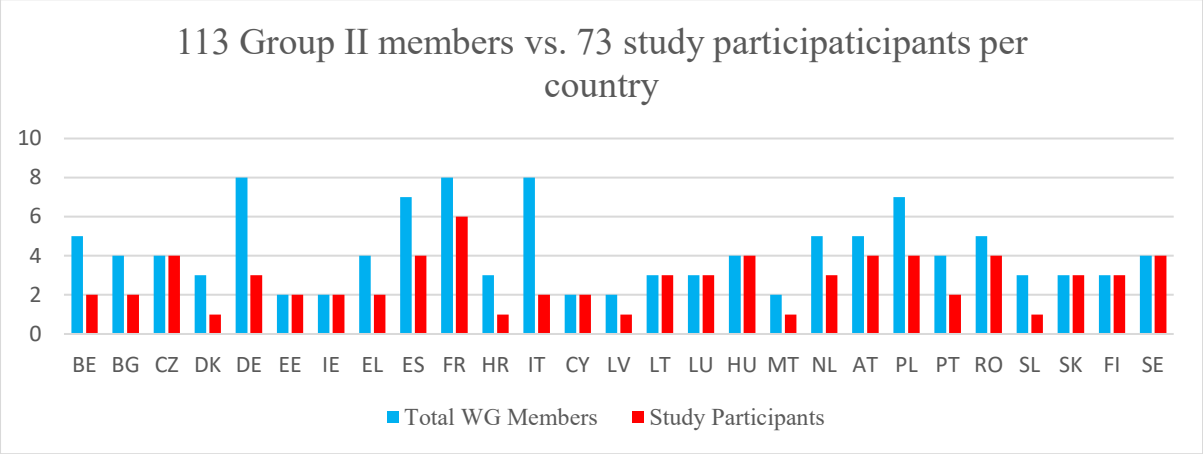
Note: **Due to the lower response rate, the results for Cyprus, Latvia, Malta, the Netherlands and Sweden have low reliability.*

Source: Eurofound, 2020a.

2.3 Role of trade unions

Trade unions are organisations that use a collective voice to represent employees' interests. Their main concerns centre around issues such as working conditions, payments, discrimination, workplace safety and labour law, among many others, on national and/or European levels. As the COVID-19 crisis approached, trade unions played a more essential role than ever in protecting workers, resolving workplace issues and enhancing the well-being of workers as bargaining representatives during negotiations. This study collected primary data from over 70 members of the EESC Workers' Group (Group II) and from one ETUC (European Trade Union Confederation) representative. The vast majority of Workers' Group representatives are affiliated to the ETUC. Figure 6 depicts the representation of study participants covered by all EU-27 countries. Group II closely monitored the COVID-19 pandemic from the beginning and its impact on employees, delivering several opinions on the undermining of working conditions. Therefore, this study investigates and collects all necessary information from the perspective of Workers' Group members to support the monitoring of the COVID-19 pandemic situation, and highlights the impacts had on workers' behaviour.

Figure 6. Study participation, EU-27



Source: Author's own elaboration.

3. Methodology

The research question and study aim of this paper have been investigated by semi-quantitative research and constructivist grounded theory (GT). The combination of these two methodological tools has enabled a more comprehensive understanding of studied substantial theory of research.

3.1. Approach to theory construction

In this research, the theory construction obtained the interpretive tradition that contains constructivist GT. This form of GT prioritises the study phenomena and consists of a relativist ontology and subjectivist epistemology; it highlights that there are multiple realities shaped by context (Charmaz, 2006, p. 126-130). Grounded theory is a study approach based on individual accounts that investigates processes, meanings, and perceptions, generating a substantive theory grounded in data (Charmaz, 2006, p. 8). This project is unique because it addresses and raises awareness of the ongoing COVID-19 crisis from the European trade unions' perspective and how workers' behaviour is shaped by TICTM.

3.2. Quantitative data collection

The data was collected from Eurostat (2020; 2019) online European statistics for information regarding a number of employees on TICTM and their digital skills. This study also used the EESC search engines such as *Members' Portal*, *Opinion* and *Study* search to collect data about the EESC opinions and studies published during COVID-19. The European Commission's (2020) Digital Economy and Society Index (2020) as well as the Economist Intelligence Unit's (2020) Democracy Index provided in-depth details necessary for the connection between participants' statements and the substantial theory development. The Eurofound's report conducted by Dephane Ahrendt (eds., 2020) provided a fundamental platform for this study with statistics about the situation during the pandemic in the EU.

3.3. Qualitative data collection

Interviews were conducted in order to gather in-depth qualitative information to understand tenets shaping the European trade unions' perspective about TICTM during the pandemic. Participants were recruited for a virtual interview via e-mail invitation. Potential participants had to be members of the Workers' Group and all be from different member states to achieve the geographical balance in theoretical sampling. In total, 11 virtual interviews were conducted via Zoom and Microsoft Teams between 29th October and 18th November 2020. One more interview was conducted via e-mail correspondence with the ETUC in order to present the European-level perspective. An intensive interviewing method, as Charmaz (2006, pp. 25-28) proposed, was used to incorporate a flexible technique with interaction to new ideas to develop a substantial theory.

A loosely structured interview guide (see appendix 1) allowed for exploration of the topic in a conversational manner to ensure *participants' flow of experiences* (Charmaz, 2006, p. 26). This interview guide was adapted after each interview to reflect information obtained, in order to comply with principles of theoretical sampling (Glaser and Strauss, 1967, pp. 45-49). The interview schedule aimed to guide the interview with non-judgemental and open-ended questions. The initial questions were designed to gain more information about participants; for example, questions about their background followed by their personal definition of digitalisation and situation in the country of their trade union during the pandemic. The objective of these questions was to land naturally on the topic of the changes in employment during Covid-19. Closing questions and an invitation to add further thoughts were included in order to signal the end of the interview.

An anonymous online survey was created to cover all member states' responses from the Workers' Group members. The survey was distributed via e-mail (see appendix 5) and was available online via Survio platform in three languages – English, French and Czech (see appendix 2, 3, 4) from 19th to 27th November 2020. In an attempt to secure as many responses as possible from all member states, two reminders were sent during this period, more specifically on Monday 23rd and Thursday 26th November (see appendix 6). In total, 65 responses covering participants from all member states (Figure 6) were collected out of a possible 113. The survey consisted of 19 questions, which were built up from the

interviews' focused coding, as described below, asking subjects about their priorities in digitalisation and how their government handled the situation during Covid-19, as well as more targeted questions related to environmental benefits, digital support and digital rights.

3.4. Data analysis

Transcription

The researcher transcribed all interviews verbatim to ensure proper data immersion and to improve in-depth understanding during analysis (Charmaz, 2006, pp. 69-70). Interviews were transcribed prior to the following interview to allow for theoretical sampling and to amend the interview schedule. A denaturalised approach to transcription was embraced to provide transparency of the data collected (Davidson, 2009). The grounded theory supports this approach because speech is used to construct meanings and perceptions that, in turn, construct reality rather than mirroring absolute reality (Charmaz, 2006, p. 55; Glaser and Strauss, 1967, p. 204).

Initial and focused coding

Following the transcription of the first interview, the initial coding commenced with the study of fragments of data for an analytical import providing a platform for the researcher to move into an interactive analytical space (Charmaz, 2006, p. 42). During this early stage, the initial line-by-line coding represented actions in each segment rather than theoretical labels to assure that the emerging theory was grounded in the participants' experiences (Charmaz, 2006, p. 47-48). Moreover, 'in vivo' codes, also described as an aspect of real life, played a crucial role in the preservation of participants' meanings and experiences; for example, participants often responded in first-person plural point of view when attempting to embrace the collective voice "*us*" or "*we*", usually speaking on behalf their national trade union, the EESC or European trade unions in general (Glaser and Strauss, 1967, p. 40).

Focused coding

The second major stage of coding was more selective than the previous phase and analysed larger segments of data (Charmaz, 2006, pp. 57-60). Selective coding was incorporated to systematically link all categories developed during initial coding with the core categories (Strauss and Corbin, 1990, pp. 116-119). This was done through the explication of a story line, which refers to the conceptualisation of a descriptive story about the central phenomenon (Strauss, 1987, p. 69). Focused codes were selected pursuant to the most frequent and significant codes from the initial coding stage. Therefore, these decisions were made to ensure the integration of the most incisive and complete analytical sense of categories. This phase also provided the researcher space for constant comparisons and the evolution of new ideas to ground the direction of theoretical sampling (Strauss, 1987, p. 112). The objective of this phase was to connect and integrate categories in order to ensure that all variations were captured by the emerging theory (Willig, 2013, p. 36).

Theoretical coding

Theoretical codes, represented by substantive categories that were developed through the data analysis process, conceptualised the integration of codes into the theory (Glasser and Holton, 2005; Hernandez, 2009). Theoretical coding aimed to build theory from data by moving the analytical story in a theoretical direction and involving the conceptualisation of substantive codes (Charmaz, 2006, p. 63). This sophisticated phrase followed codes that were selected during focused coding and analysed possible relationships between each of them (Glaser and Strauss, 1967, p. 72). During this stage, the researcher began exploring the literature and investigated how theoretical codes related to and could be integrated into a theory of substantive area in a coherent and comprehensible manner (Glaser, 1978, p. 72).

Diagramming

The visual presentation of categorical interrelation was illustrated through diagramming, which ensured the transparency of the researcher's analytical thinking throughout the development of the substantive theory (see Figure 8) (Corbin and Strauss, 1990, pp. 197-223). Diagramming provided a central part of the coding and theoretical construction process (Clarke, 2003; 2005; Struss, 1987; Strauss and Corbin, 1998). In this study, the idea of creating a visual image supported the coherence of emerging theory and

enabled the researcher to see the relative power and the direction of theoretical categories (Charmaz, 2006, pp. 117-119).

3.5. Limits of the research

COVID-19

The current lockdown measures resulted in a notable limitation, since the researcher could not conduct interviews face-to-face, and some potential participants were overloaded with their work because of many ad-hoc tasks due to the pandemic. The closure of many public places limited the researcher's access to sources, such as libraries, bookshops or newspapers and other sources that she would be able to consume during her normal daily life.

Sources

As the research area was TICTM during the ongoing COVID-19 crisis, there sometimes were insufficient sources on the internet. While the researcher elaborated each member state according to the participants' statements, internet sources also allowed her to better understand the context of current restrictions, measures and the attitude of trade unions and government towards the crisis. However, many sources were written in the country's native language. Therefore, the researcher had to investigate some countries' profiles without additional sources; for example, there are no statistics published concerning Slovenia's TICTM data in 2020. Besides, some countries did not have a single unified policy brief or strategy stating the current measures and the possible impact on workers and employers.

The COVID-19 situation was chaotic for civil society in general. Therefore, it was sometimes impossible to find a reliable source with quality information (e. g. disinformation, fake news), which would be useful for this study. Although the new exceptional Eurostat data browser allowed the researcher to investigate digitalisation statistics, there was no data concerning internet use by employees, particularly the daily or weekly frequency of internet usage by workers. Therefore, she would be able to compare how many employees were active internet users in 2019 alongside the country's readiness. The researcher was also limited by time as she was assigned a short-term position as a trainee in the EESC Workers' Group.

4. Analysis

This chapter analyses the findings of the study, including a substantive theory investigating how TICTM has shaped workers' behaviour throughout the pandemic from the perspective of European trade unions.

The model developed three theoretical codes that emerged from the analysis and provided coherence to an analytic story. These theoretical codes contained five focused codes, each of which included properties of codes that emerged from the data analysis listed in Table 1. A visual presentation of the observed transactions illustrating the inter-relation between categories and subcategories is presented in Figure 8. The findings for each of the theoretical codes are examined by an overview of the diagrammatic model followed by the elaboration of each member state based on the participants' statements to better understand the interrelation between COVID-19 and TICTM on the EU level. The grounded findings in the data are granted by participants' quotes. These quotes are presented in italics, and brackets within quotes allow for improved coherence for the reader.

Table 1. Composition of analysis

Theoretical Codes	Focused Codes	Initial Codes
Adaptation to the new normal	Meeting digital needs	Lack of equipment Preparedness Networking Connection Inclusivness Right to disconnect Work-life balance
Moral uncertainty	Autonomy	Novel opportunities Virtual meetings Online conferences Time and place flexibility
	Negative emotional consequences	Technological stress Concern Privacy issues Mistrust Monitoring Confusion Fear Lack of understanding Exclusion Social isolation
Digital movement	Hope	Fight Defend
	Priorities	Environment Digital rights Closing the gap Healthy environment Working conditions Gender Curricula Government

Source: Author's own elaboration.

4.1. Model of TICTM factors

The central aim of this study was to develop a model of how TICTM has shaped workers during the Covid-19 pandemic from the perspective of European trade unions. Figure 8 shows the interrelation between three developed theoretical codes and five focused codes. The model is presented with arrows

depicting the flow of three substantive codes and enables in-depth investigation of each participant's perspective to properly observe the TICTM effect on workers during the pandemic. The dotted lines indicate an overlap of all three theoretical codes because the 'adaptation to the new normal' represents the proliferation of virtual work organisation at the beginning of COVID-19, reflected in the following theoretical codes. Based on participants' accounts, adaptation to the new normal, moral uncertainty and digital movement must all be present in the middle row, comprising of focused codes, to understand the feelings and expressions of participants and to achieve quality outcomes of the TICTM factors.

Adaptation to the new normal

The first theoretical code captured the 'adaptation to the new normal' as participants referred to this phenomenon in which the workforce had to adjust to the virtual work organisation overnight, and although applicable at different contextual levels, digitalisation was seen as a necessary process to 'meet digital needs' relating to quality and decent remote work.

"We have to make sure that this digital transition is also a just transition (...). Therefore, my political appeal is to adapt and modernize all the workforce to the new normal" (Austria).

The absence of essential equipment accompanied most of the workforce during the rapid transition to a remote work environment.

"The impact of digitalisation on employment is that working people have been obliged to work remotely and very often this was without any appropriate digital instruments" (Italy).

The performance of workers involved in TICTM differs significantly in terms of the preparedness of their company, organisation or even government to undertake their daily responsibilities in the virtual work organisation. On the one hand, some respondents expressed a positive attitude towards the digital technologies provided.

"There has been the support provided (by the government) over a number of years, so the workforce that works from home was already prepared even before the pandemic" (Sweden).

On the other hand, some were not satisfied with the level of preparedness.

"There was no digital support, (government) left them (workers) behind alone, even in many cases did not provide adequate financial compensation for survival" (Slovakia).

The digital world, which is no longer limited to time and place, offers countless possibilities related to connections, interrelations and networks.

"We had a teleconference system that never really worked and was hugely expensive. It was of limited use, and then all of a sudden everything was possible after one week. We had the Zoom account, and now we have daily meetings with our headquarters in Frankfurt and Berlin. This is something that was unthinkable before. We met more or less once a week before. So, we have totally switched. You do not feel that far on remote work in Brussels anymore" (Germany).

Besides, a foreseeable advantage of TICTM is the ability to better include those with disabilities, workers who can now benefit from more career opportunities offered by the virtual environment.

"There is this possibility of working from a different place and more inclusive environment, especially for persons with disabilities and other vulnerable groups that we can prepare for future work" (Romania).

With the increasing number of remote workers as well as necessary adaptation to the virtual environment, the work-life balance and associated right to disconnect have become a heated debate on a national and European level.

"Nobody can ask you to connect at one o'clock at night. So, it must be controlled, and I think the right to disconnect is a very important issue to be solved as soon as possible because it's related to your mental health. So, it should be clear that you have a personal and professional balance granted" (Hungary).

This theoretical code was the most frequent though all participants' statements because the code was accompanied by the most essential initial codes regarding the interrelation between TICTM and the COVID-19 pandemic, such as connection, inclusiveness and work-life balance. The European trade unions see the 'adaptation to the new normal' as a fast transition towards a virtual employment paradigm. In the face of a global health crisis, the world has used digitalisation and TICTM as tools for support, allowing for the EU labour force to adapt, be active and creative in the cyberspace during turbulent times.

Moral uncertainty

The second theoretical code participants described was a stage of uncertainty, wherein the workforce started to experience technological stress, privacy issues and exclusion when they settled in their 'new normal' workplace during the pandemic. This 'moral uncertainty' was also strengthened by the proposal of strict and indefinite measures by governments in a way unparalleled since the Second World War.

"Government has hardly supported workers at all. There have been long periods of uncertainty, government has started a dialogue on the law on telework, and they listen to the social partners' points of view, but they don't really include them" (Austria).

Digitalisation, on the one hand, is shaping the labour force with an immense number of new opportunities for better qualified, decent and flexible jobs, regardless of timing and location.

"Digitalisation can be adopted to do all sorts of things that you and I can't even think about and create jobs that we can't even imagine now" (Ireland).

On the other hand, the rising trend of job elimination, due to the economic situation created by the COVID-19 pandemic and an insufficient level of digital skills demanded by the Fourth Industrial Revolution, is recognised as a concern by most participants.

"What do we do when people stay out of a job and we're not able to train them for new tasks. We are not able to fulfil new jobs that are created and are more technical or high-tech oriented" (Spain).

In most cases, unions agreed that the workforce of the whole Union is under tremendous psychological stress, which was strengthened by the shifting workloads into an isolated virtual environment, such as online meetings and video conferences.

"There is this technological stress because you're just sitting isolated on different platforms and sometimes it works, and sometimes it doesn't (work). And so, there is this moment of stress at work that everyone experiences now" (Sweden).

In relation to the fast transition to the virtual work organisation and the subsequent evolution of new practices, respondents mentioned that many question marks have been raised around digital rights and privacy issues.

"There is an essential question concerning not only personal data but also data in general. Today, we know that sensitive data could be breached and it's a question of the privacy. Many workers are raising the question 'What do they do there with my data? This is also a question of democracy and sovereignty in our states" (France).

The invasion of privacy is also accompanied by mistrust in services or platforms provided by businesses, governments or organisations. Respondents affiliated with the trust of democratic values with the issue of privacy, which they felt was the responsibility of their government.

"We need to trust the government that they didn't make a deal with some kind of financial or food provider sector. We have to be sure that they are working in the interest of the citizens and they're protecting their rights. (...) This situation is so attractive now for businesses also to actually use this pandemic situation. It's difficult now, we'll see how much we can trust our governments" (Lithuania).

The opinion of monitoring was contradictory, as some unions perceived it as an invasion of privacy while others saw it as a benefit to avoid unpaid extra hours. Nevertheless, they all agreed that there must be a regulation to limit it to the workplace.

"The question is whether it is balanced by benefits because otherwise it is a huge invasion of privacy. It should be clearly defined what monitoring means and when the employer can use this tool. Ideally, it should be limited to work performance only, and be agreed in a collective agreement or stipulated by a regulation" (Czech Republic).

The pandemic has also brought confusion and fear to the labour market, among other adverse emotional and psychological reactions.

"I talked with other European trade unionists. Digitalisation is a question to be handled by unionists who detect a fear about this fast transition within their labour force because everything is new, and the workforce doesn't know how to handle it. This is why we are trying to make a contribution and calm down our workforce by saying 'listen, this is a technology like any other technology, it is unavoidable change, and we must face it together'" (France).

Workers affiliate themselves with these negative psychological consequences, especially when they experience a lack of understanding, for example, they are not enough digitally literate, trained, educated and/or equipped.

"The workforce is scared, especially older people, because if you have to handle something that you don't understand; for example, many programs are in English or even in your native language (but) you don't understand what the program is telling you. It's something completely new, and they are very afraid of changes, and it creates a stress" (Spain).

The understanding of the issue of the worker exclusion due to an inappropriate digital capacity was apparent throughout most of the transcripts.

"Digitalization can create more polarisation. People who have money, education and devices can profit and benefit from all opportunities. People who are poor, not qualified and deviceless are excluded. So, there is a huge digital divide now" (France).

Even though some workers were appropriately equipped with digital technologies and skills, according to unions, social isolation occurred while social distancing was enforced and physical contacts were restricted.

"I think not everybody can handle this kind of isolation and it creates a disadvantage for some people in terms of work-life balance because it can create stress" (Hungary).

Although autonomous digital jobs open novel opportunities regardless of time and place, the extensive analysis of workers' negative emotions provided a detailed insight into European workers' uneasiness during TICTM. The 'moral uncertainty' is seen as the dichotomy of workers who were prepared before the pandemic and therefore able to benefit, and workers who were not prepared and suffered as a result.

Digital movement

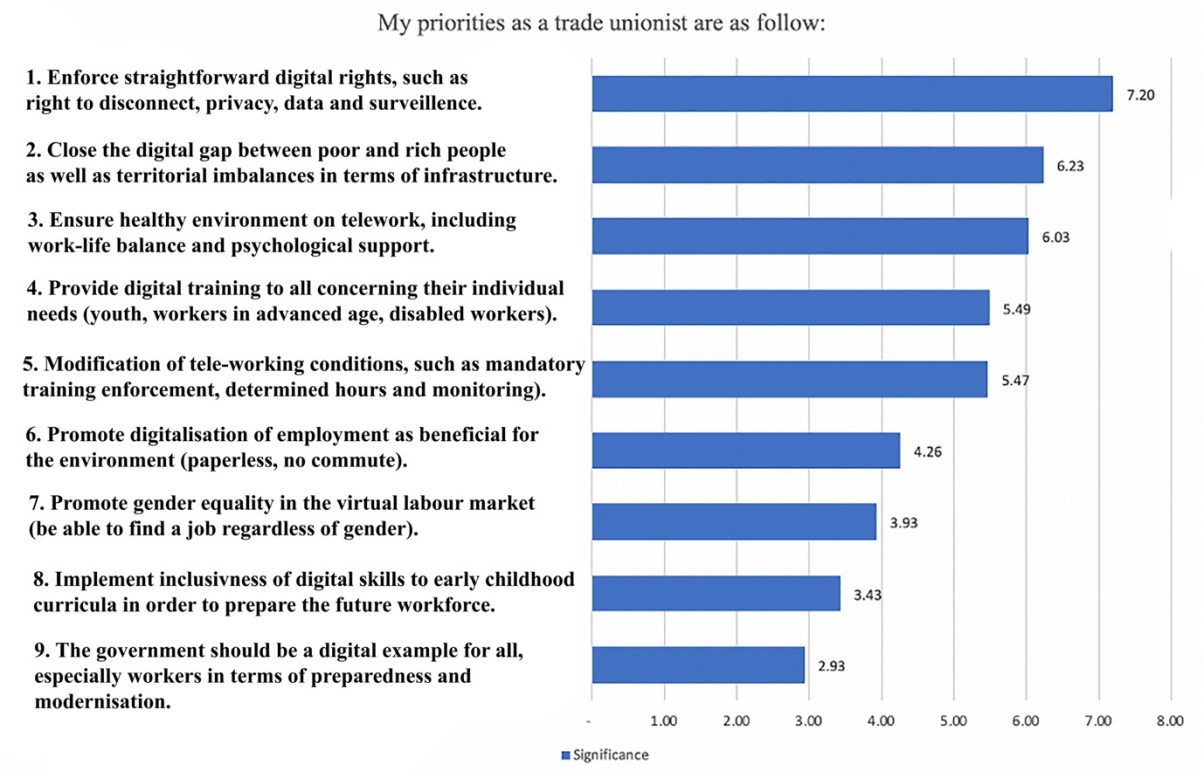
The previous section's relevance is explained further in this area, where the data is promoted in the 'digital movement'. When workers settled into the 'new normal' and observed the challenges and opportunities of TICTM, a straightforward direction must be determined in order to navigate the system towards full inclusion of workers. Therefore, the 'digital movement' is the stage when all necessary needs are predetermined, and unions defend and fight for workers' interests. Although the hope for a better tomorrow was evident throughout all interviews, there were clearly doubts about getting back to the 'old normal,' so to speak.

"Everything is changing at the moment, and I hope very much that this will be mitigated next year (2021) (...), but I think we will not go back one hundred percent to the normal before the pandemic but the fight for better working conditions and decent work will remain high on the agenda" (Austria).

This hope signalled a need for support to lighten workers' burdens due to the pandemic. All interviews were taken into account and a list of up-to-date priorities was created, which pointed out possible gaps in the current labour standards. The established list was incorporated into the survey and then distributed to 113 members of the Workers' Group. In total, 65 responses to the priorities were collected and created a foundation for the 'digital movement', aiming to moderate the investigation of how TICTM

has shaped workers' behaviours from unions' perspective. The bar chart (Figure 7) depicted below presents nine priorities, which participants sorted using the 'drag and drop' function from the most significant (9 points) to the least significant (1 point). Space was provided to all participants in all three languages for additional comments. The Figure shows no segments associated with the least significant (1 point) and the most significant (8 and 9 points). This data indicates that there is no single clear priority regarding the digitalisation of employment, and therefore any of the priorities stated below should not be undermined.

Figure 7. List of trade unionists' priorities



Source: Author's own elaboration.

First, the need to launch collective bargaining to enforce fundamental digital rights on national and European levels earned the most significant proportion of points based on all 65 respondents. Participants mentioned the right to telework, entitlement to home office costs and necessary digital equipment, among other digital rights.

> *"My trade union is fighting for the conclusion of a binding inter-professional agreement on teleworking, the right to disconnect, (and) the organization of digital workers"* (France).

Second, the effort to narrow the digital divide in connection to wealth and infrastructure disparities in order to leave no one behind.

> "*We created the infrastructure for cars – bridges, signs, restriction. So, we must establish for digitalisation - many bridges - and the first bridge should be to the socially disadvantaged in order to support them and give them the opportunity to integrate"* (Lithuania).

Third, the idea that the pandemic has led us to a new, unprecedented crossroads, primarily associated with the proper approach to the balance between personal and professional life on the European level.

> *"The right to disconnect is important, and also it is the worker's duty to disconnect and be aware of work organisation. Impact on worker's mental and physical health is a big question now. We have to determinate how to handle this situation as soon as possible"* (France).

Forth, the training and digital skills of all citizens taking into account their special needs also earned a large proportion of points.

"The process towards the transition must be fair and cannot leave anyone behind. It favours the necessary training and professional reintegration processes with the support of progressive governments with clear agendas, strong trade unions and strong social dialogue and collective bargaining" (Spain).

Fifth, there is a need to modify working conditions in parallel with modernisation and virtual work organisation. The inconsistent labour standards and laws left behind nations that were not prepared for the fast transition, and these contrasts were then sharpened on the European level.

"We must modify the working conditions and the labour laws all over the EU because innovation is faster than the rulemaking and it creates a lot of differences and problems which can be a quite handicap overall" (Hungary).

Sixth, the promotion of policy related to climate neutrality must always be in line with digitalisation and vice versa. The majority of participants, who saw TICTM as being environmentally beneficial, mentioned the decrease in consumption of energy due to usage and development of environmentally friendly technologies, the decline in Co2 emissions caused by decreased commutes and more sustainable processes of natural resources.

"Developments in employment promoting digitalisation are linked and related to supportive measures in helping the environment. It can minimize the unnecessary transfer of labour and creates a more focused approach in employment, which can minimize environmental risks" (Cyprus).

Seventh, a contradictory result was achieved on the issue of gender equality through digitalisation. On the one hand, participants believed that digitalisation of employment overall could enhance the labour market with more professional opportunities, thus increasing the employability of women.

"Digitalisation can bring (…) advantages to the world of labour and therefore provide for the creation of employment opportunities (…) for women (and encourage) more gender equality" (ETUC).

On the other hand, unions also stressed that TICTM strengthened the inequalities because of women's devotion of time to the case of family members as opposed to devotion to new professional opportunities.

"The moment they are both at home all of a sudden he thinks she's at home and she can do it. And so eventually I think that it goes backwards for women. They got loaded with even more work" (Spain).

Eighth, the future workforce's preparation for the digital development of employment is tightly associated with digital vocational training.

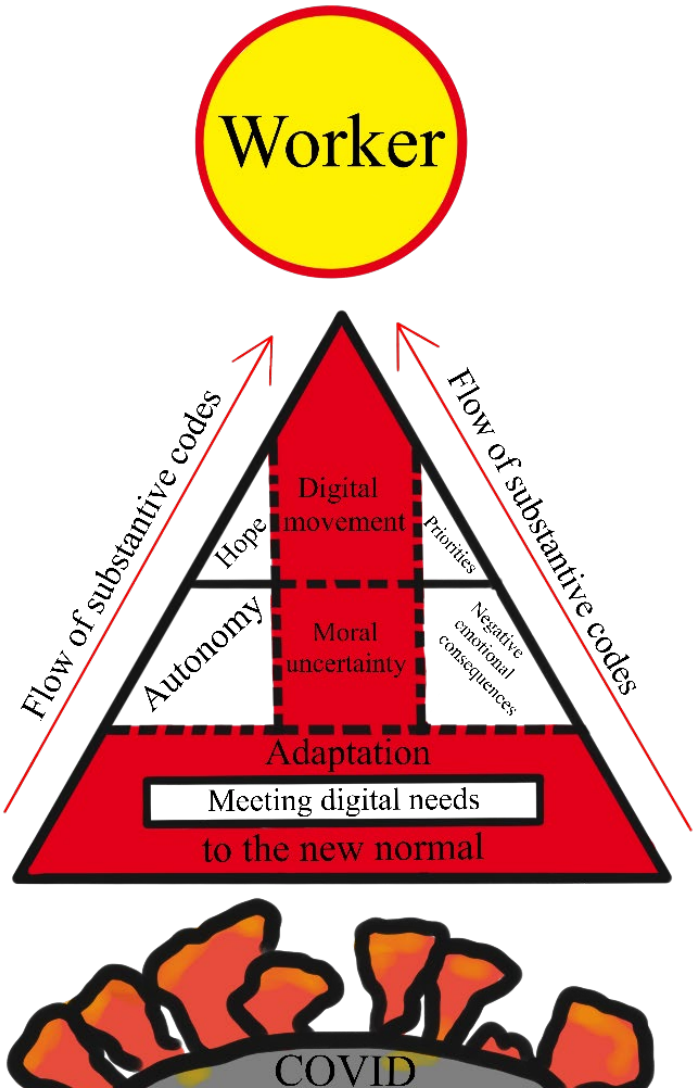
"*Skill development and vocational training must be encouraged during school time. It is an advantage for employers and employees"* (Belgium).

Ninth, the governments throughout the whole Union should support workers to their full potential with the adaptation of policies and administration practices in parallel with innovations and technological developments.

"I think sometimes that the government style of work is not fitting the dynamism of the world. And I think this is a huge problem. (…). Imagine there is still legislation in few EU countries where the state takes 20 or 30 days to respond to your letter" (Lithuania).

TICTM provided an alternative work method for workers across all ages, accompanied by an enhancement of the labour market due to available networking, training and professional opportunities regardless of time and place. However, the fast transition that evolved with the pandemic also evoked negative emotions of uncertainty, fear and stress in the workforce. This situation puts unions into the position of the protectors, set to defend workers' rights and navigate the system towards the modernisation as safely and effectively as possible during the COVID-19 crisis.

Figure 8. Model of the TICTM factors

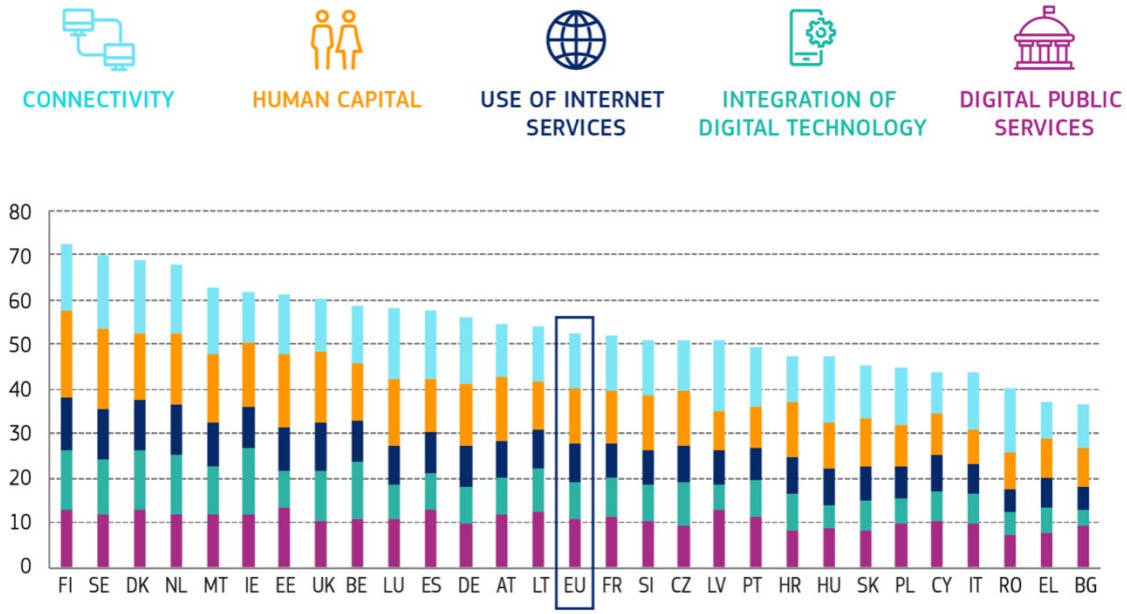


Source: Author's own elaboration.

4.2. Elaboration of member states

This chapter investigates the differences and similarities of each participant in each member state. Therefore, this chapter was the most connected with the comparative method, which was used to create an elaboration of each country's profile that corresponded to the perspective of trade unions. This section also used secondary data to understand the context of participants' statements, such as policies, measures and levels of digitalisation. Furthermore, all respondents were asked to provide a statement or message to the EU workforce, and the most appropriate were chosen as an introduction to each country's profile. Figure 9 shows the Digital Economy and Social Index 2020 of EU-28 (data are based on 2019) as the digitalisation level was seen by the majority of European trade unions as essential to the implementation of TICTM. The 'connectivity' stands for digital infrastructure; 'human capital' for digital skills; 'use of internet services' for the usage of social media channels, platforms as well as teleworking services; 'integration of digital technology' for adaptation of businesses to digital working arrangements; 'digital public services' for the adaptation of government's activities to the digital age.

Figure 9. Digital Economy and Social Index 2020, EU-28



Source: European Commission, 2020.

Austria

"Keep calm, shape and influence the digital change and struggle for inclusion of necessary training, job security and digital well-being."

Although some respondents pointed out that Austria is not seen as a digital leader in the EU, according to Figure 9, Austria is overall above average, especially in terms of human capital and digital public services with an emphasis to open data and e-government (Europa, 2020; European Commission, 2020). Austria's digital development ambition is to join the most advanced 'Digital 10' nations (Oesterreich.gv.at, 2020). However, connectivity and usage of internet services are still seen as areas in need of improvement. Therefore, it is not a surprise that all participants had chosen as their first priority the elimination of the 'closure of the digital gap' between rich and poor in order to provide all workers with equal benefits in the labour market. Participants also mentioned that the government hardly supported the workforce in terms of digitalisation. Even though respondents highlighted that TICTM was recommended where appropriate, they stressed that there was no implementation of the right to telework, which undermines workers' rights. According to estimated statistics, around 45% of Austrian employees worked from home (Eurofound, 2020b; Statista, 2020). Although participants were anxious about the unemployment rate, which rose to over 11% at the end of 2020, the European Commission's study reported that Austrian inhabitants expressed the highest level of well-being in 2020 (European Commission, 2020).

Belgium

"Struggle for vocational training rights and use opportunities that digitalisation can bring."

All respondents recognised that there were many advantages to TICTM, but only under the condition that the employee can be autonomous and use digital technologies in a self-determined way. They also recognised the significance of vocational training and digital skills development as something that must be encouraged because it benefits both employers and employees. Belgium is among the TOP 8 digitalised countries in the EU-27 (European Commission, 2020). Respondents highlighted the mandatory telework implemented throughout the whole territory, as is also evident from early estimates defining Belgium as having one of the largest shares of over 50% TICTM (Eurofound, 2020b). However, there are still gaps to be filled in the legislation, which does not determine the straightforward home-telework modalities (The Brussels Times, 2020). Therefore, the government calls on individual

companies and businesses to define the TICTM regulations, which can undermine working conditions, such as working hours and monitoring, negatively impacting employees (Osborne Clarke, 2020). Interestingly, all respondents coordinated in their first and last priority, the former being to the 'closure of the digital gap' between rich and poor, and the latter being to 'the government should be a digital example'.

Bulgaria

"Digitalisation is our future, and we have to specialise in all possible areas of development."

Although Bulgaria has the lowest proportion of TICTM and is the least developed country in digitalisation, respondents mentioned many advanced government initiatives, such as buying tablets and computers to support distance learning (European Commission, 2020; Eurostat, 2020; News 5, 2020). However, they also stressed that this initiative could provide the necessary digital education to all Bulgarian citizens only if digital training is implemented in parallel. Early estimates predict that Bulgaria no longer has the lowest share of TICTM as over 20% of employees were teleworking in 2020 (Eurofound, 2020b). All participants were particularly concerned about the unemployment rate, which increased from 6.3% in January to 9% in April 2020 (Trading Economics, 2020a). The first priorities of participants varied from the 'closure of the digital gap' to 'the modification of tele-working conditions.' However, they matched their seventh, eighth and ninth priorities, which included 'the government should be a digital example,' 'implement digital skills into early curricula' and 'promote the gender equality in the virtual labour market'. Despite the fact that Bulgarian digitalisation progress levels have not dramatically increased over the past five years, there are various novel digital policies that can boost digital skills, the amount of employees engaging with TICTM and the overall level of digitalisation in the near future.

Croatia

"Go in line with the times, use any opportunity to learn and join trade unions in order to fight for your rights."

The recognition of digital preparedness has been thoroughly discussed in Croatia, especially in terms of the pandemic, because the country's digital ranking is falling behind the average of EU-27. The participant, on the one hand, mentioned that the government recommended TICTM. On the other hand, a recent discussion about the modification of Labour Act raised concerns since, according to the respondent, the change could undermine workers' rights. Even though TICTM was more common in Croatia compared to other countries in 2019, the early estimates determined that it has the lowest percentage of all EU-27 in 2020, substantially less than 20% (Eurofound, 2020b; Eurostat, 2020). This could be due to a lack of support to obtain higher qualifications and/or the emerging risk for work-life balance from the remote work, as Croatian unionist stated. Therefore, her appeal was that 'the government should be a digital example for all' followed by ensuring the 'digital training.'

Czech Republic

"Your right should also exist in the digital era."

Almost all respondents expressed uncertainty regarding the government's support measures to employees, stating they "*don't have enough information,*" "*did not notice at all*" or "*ad-hoc not structured support*". Additionally, respondents mentioned that the Czech government has had digitalisation "*on the table"* for an extended period of time, but despite this, the country's practices are still behind when compared to other countries, as reflected in early estimates in which the Czech Republic is slightly below average in digitalisation (European Commission, 2020). Some respondents mentioned that there is only a minor definition of home-office in the Labour Code (Pravni Prostor, 2020). Therefore, it is identified by participants as undoubtedly undermining workers' rights concerning the COVID-19 crisis and the increasing level of TICTM, estimated at over 25% (Eurofound, 2020b). Participants' first priority varied from the implementation of 'digital rights' to 'healthy environment during telework' to 'the modification of tele-working conditions.' According to most Czech unionists, the lack of digital rights and uncoordinated support has left employees behind and strengthened work instability during COVID-19.

Denmark

"The social dialogue is the way."

The Danish unionist perceived digitalisation as an inevitable future, presenting many challenging opportunities and advantages for both trade unions and workers. She considered insufficient digital skills of workers to be a main drawback, as it leads to structural unemployment in some countries. In the case of Denmark, its digitalisation is among the TOP 3 EU countries, with an above average level human capital, and it is predicted that TICTM increased to almost 40% in 2020 (Eurofound, 2020b; European Commission, 2020). The participant also highlighted that the Danish government has recommended telework and provided balanced working conditions for workers. She mentioned that an increase in TICTM must always take place in parallel to the improvement of digital skills. Therefore, she called for constant 'digital training' and digital skills enhancement, as deskilling or stagnation can lead to a rising unemployment rate.

Estonia

"Do not be afraid of changes, tomorrow is already here."

Estonian unionists also chose 'digital training' as their first priority and added that digital skills are needed in order to provide the workforce with qualifications, therefore avoiding unemployment. Participants stressed that the Estonian system was already prepared for TICTM in terms of digital rights and the high level of digitalisation above the EU-27 average (European Commission, 2020). They also stated that the distribution of digital means was sometimes even more efficient than before the pandemic. According to them, the government used social media to inform citizens about employment measures and restrictions.

Finland

"Digitalisation can be the advantage, if we regulate it properly."

Finland was a leader in digitalisation in 2020 as well as in the implementation of TICTM in 2019 (European Commission, 2020; Eurostat, 2020). Therefore, participants stated that Finland's level of digital means and support was already adequate enough and prepared prior to the pandemic. They also stressed that TICTM provides better productivity and transparency among many other opportunities. However, the increase of TICTM was below average in 2020, around 30% (Eurofound, 2020b). This could be due to the government recommendation to telework depending on the increase of COVID-19 cases regionally rather than nationally (KPMG, 2020a). Participants stressed that digital support was provided in most cases, and that there have been investments in digital means and training to secure effective TICTM during the pandemic. There are currently discussions about modifications in legislation regarding the home-office, in which participants are involved (YLE, 2020). Therefore, their main priority is to negotiate proper 'digital rights' that would ensure a decent and quality conditions for TICTM.

France

"EU workforce must be involved as a stakeholder in regulations and control."

Even though French unionists' main priority was also 'digital rights', they highlighted the decrease of social rights caused by the permanent invasion of privacy and worsening of working conditions. However, they recognised that TICTM has many benefits if appropriately regulated; for example, broader and faster communication, the capacity for more information, the creation of better-quality jobs and opportunities to acquire new skills. Almost all participants stressed that there had not been any particular support to employees from the government in terms of digitalisation besides the financial measures provided to companies in order to keep employees at work. Although the country's digitalisation level is slightly below the average, the amount of TICTM grew to approximately 45% in 2020 (Eurofound, 2020b; European Commission, 2020). French unionists were notably concerned that digitalisation could suppress employees' creativity and opportunity to develop new initiatives at work.

Germany

"Let us fight for the reduction of working hours, which was always the right response to the technical development in our history. We always failed when we opposed the development in the past."

Germany stands as a third country with above average digitalisation capacities, which was also reflected by the support given to employees by many new initiatives included in the digital national strategy, such as digital infrastructure availability and a modern regulatory framework (European Commission, 2020; German Digital Technologies, 2020). 'Digital rights' played a crucial role for German unionists, who mentioned the need to secure data protection as well as work-life balance, which is mirrored in new collective agreements. They recognised the need to implement digitalisation of employment in order to meet the demands for increasing interrelation and communication due to online meetings and video conferences on TICTM, which rose to approximately 25% (Eurofound, 2020b). Although digital platforms have created a base for global solidarity, German unionists are aware of some pitfalls accompanied by the proliferation of technologies, such as the supervision by big data and unfair working practices.

Greece

"We should reinforce digitalisation as long as we preserve our human and labour rights."

Participants recognised the importance of digitalisation and what opportunities it can bring to the workforce, especially with Greece being the second least developed country in terms of digitalisation in the EU-27 (European Commission, 2020). They were concerned about the risk of structural unemployment because of the enormous digital pressure demanded by the digital age that we live in. This expressed uneasiness may be rooted in the significant increase in the unemployment rate from 15,6% in March to 17,7% in May 2020 (Trading Economics, 2020b). Gender inequality in the workforce is also crucial, as around 7% more women are unemployed than men (Country Economy, 2020). The 'gap closure' of infrastructure and wealth was the third priority for both participants. The first priority varied from the necessary development of 'digital training' to the implementation of straightforward 'digital rights'. Both participants mentioned that the Greek government has recommended telework, which was reflected in the TICTM increase to 30%, and provided all necessary information needed for both employees and employers (Eurofound, 2020b).

Hungary

"Use the opportunity and fight for your rights!"

All participants understand digitalisation as necessary modernisation for the future of an accelerated world caused by digital tools and virtual work organisation. The interrelation of the words *modernisation* and *future* can be indirectly interpreted as hopeful, given that Hungary is below average in digitalisation (European Commission, 2020). Most participants considered 'digital rights' to be a priority because of the obstacle to properly implement TICTM, since only around 20% was recorded (Eurofound, 2020b). There is a marked difference between *telework*, which is stated in Labour Code as a regular virtual work organisation conducted at a place other than the employer's premises, and *home-office*, which is not governed by law and refers to when an employee spends few days per week at the office, not necessarily with digital technologies (Horváth and Petrovics, 2020). However, some participants reported that there is still a lack of specific regulations regarding privacy, surveillance, monitoring and working hours. Respondents also mentioned the government's initiative to provide free internet for 30 days to all households where online education is conducted (Budapest Business Journal, 2020). This would support Hungarian digital progress in the future as the internet could be more accessible to all households regardless of wealth disparities, but only if it is implemented for a longer time period than one month.

Ireland

"Unionise. Collective action to protect jobs, rights, services and the environment is now essential."

Ireland is the seventh most advanced country in digitalisation, which was also highlighted by its second-place ranking in terms of estimated implementation of TICTM, which accounted for almost 50% of workers in 2020 (Eurofound, 2020b; European Commission, 2020). All participants described digitalisation as the Fourth Industrial Revolution, promoting decent work, equality, fundamental rights and intellectualisation of work. Their particular attention was paid to workforce equality. On the one hand, digitalisation of employment can increase equality because of new labour market opportunities. On the other hand, there is a risk of job loss caused by higher demand for digitally skilled workers, which can further diminish the leverage and result in *"hollowing out"* and increasing inequalities. They also provided an additional comment concerning the priorities, more specifically that there should be a vital requirement to recognise trade unions and collective bargaining in order to achieve all priorities mentioned above in Figure 7. The government is aware of the massive increase in the TICTM situation during COVID-19 and published the National Remote Working Strategy, which aims to support all teleworkers and navigate forward to achieve Ireland's vision of future work (Government of Ireland, 2021). The Strategy is an update of the Remote Work series publications from 2019 and 2020, which signal the Department's constant monitoring of the situation.

Italy

"Let's regulate digitalisation through collective bargaining."

Although Italy is the fourth least developed country in terms of digitalisation in the EU-27, participants saw it as an opportunity for a new arrangement and structure of work. This could possibly improve work-life balances and the well-being of workers and lead to the creation of many new jobs thanks to the proliferation of digital technologies (European Commission, 2020). 'Digital rights' earned particular significance as the right to disconnect, which entered into force in 2017, provided a legal base for decent and quality remote jobs (Coote and Harper, 2021). Respondents also mentioned that the government fostered and enforced teleworking and social distancing policies since Italy was the first EU country hit by COVID-19. Although TICTM is regulated through *agile working,* also known as smart working regardless of time and place, and can be conducted both inside and outside the employer's building, TICTM was not a popular working method amongst employees until the pandemic (Biasi, 2020). COVID-19 has caused *agile work* to be considered by the legislator as a regular work organisation, increasing the estimated share of TICTM to almost 50% (Eurofound, 2020b). Therefore, participants are notably concerned about workers losing certain rights, especially those who newly enter the labour market and are not digitally prepared. However, they also highlighted that the digital method of work could increase inclusion of people with disabilities.

Latvia

"Digitalisation provides several opportunities but keep in mind your rights."

For the participant, digitalisation evokes work safety which is then undermined by the virtual working organisation. Therefore, her main priority was to 'modify tele-working conditions' according to workforce's needs, such as training needs and work-life balance. Latvia is below average in digitalisation, especially in terms of the integration of modern technologies by companies, which can be seen as a significant obstacle when it comes to TICTM and the necessary equipment it entails (European Commission, 2020). However, the respondent stressed that the government launched several calls for training and distance learning, which could essentially increase the digitalisation level of Latvia as well as the amount of digital skills needed for future work organisation.

Lithuania

"Learn, learn, learn."

All respondents perceived digitalisation, on the one hand, as an *opportunity* that creates faster communication, more efficient work and a possibility to develop professional careers free from the shackles of a traditional employment models, allowing for a better work-life balance. On the other hand, it is also a *challenge* for them since there must be boundaries to secure the balance between private and professional life. Moreover, employees' rights have to be adequately determined and implemented, such as the right to disconnect and protection against invasion of privacy. Participants mentioned that the government launched online training and education initiatives, but the lack of equipment persists. Whereas Lithuania is slightly more advanced in digitalisation and the integration of digital technologies is above the EU-27 average, the use of internet services and digital skills are still central obstacles since Lithuania fell behind as the country with the fifth least developed human capital (European Commission, 2020). Therefore, virtual education, training, and up-skilling are seen as the government's key initiatives for supporting Lithuania's future digital progress (Digital Lithuania, 2021). The equipment shortage mentioned by participants could be visible due to a sudden demand and the expansion in TICTM implementation during COVID-19, which increased to more than 30% of employees in 2020 (Eurofound, 2020b).

Luxembourg

"Digitalisation is a necessity, and we must develop digital skills and fight against digital exclusion."

All participants chose 'digital rights' as their first priority. This can be associated with their definition of digitalisation as an important innovation that will change the conditions of living and working, either entirely or partially. Therefore, they called for modifications in the legislation that are in line with employees' needs, such as the right to disconnect, monitoring work-life balance and determining surveillance at work to avoid the invasion of privacy. Besides, there is neither a right to telework nor the initiative to implement it (Euractive, 2020). Luxembourg is among one of the more advanced countries when it comes to digitalisation, which was also reflected in a few policies related to TICTM (Eurofound, 2020b). Although participants mentioned that the government supported employees in terms of digitalisation by, for example, negotiating agreements with neighbouring countries relating to the taxation of teleworkers abroad, there are still many legal gaps that have to be covered in order to provide a quality and decent TICTM experience.

Malta

"Digitalisation should be enforced with all benefits and opportunities that it can provide to the workforce, but we need to make sure that workplaces are not lost, training is ensured, and wage gaps are reduced even between gender."

As a first priority, the participant chose 'digital training', as is evident from his message to the EU workforce above. Although he believed that the digitalisation of employment could provide better job diversification as well as access to training, which therefore leads to better pay and employability, the participant was concerned about the risk of redundancies. Malta is among the TOP 5 digitalised countries in the EU-27, which is also evident from the government's support of initiatives for employees, for instance, the offer of necessary TICTM equipment to Gozitan residents in order to avoid their commuting to Malta, as well as a teleworking set-up benefit for all employers who secured facilities needed (Eurofound, 2020; KPMG, 2020b). These policies play a crucial role in the support of workers, especially when the TICTM share increased to almost 40% (Eurofound, 2020a). Malta is well recognised as a digital progress leader with well-implemented digital policies, as stated in its consistently monitored and updated National Digital Strategy (Digital Malta, 2014).

Netherlands

"Workers' participation is essential in the implementation process of new technology to ensure quality jobs, workers' rights and competitiveness."

All Dutch unionists chose 'digital rights' as their first priority to highlight that employee rights must be determined, shaped and implemented according to the digital development, given that the Netherlands is the fourth most advanced in digitalisation in the EU-27 (European Commission, 2020). They stated that the main advantage of TICTM is the flexibility, sustainability and quality of job regardless of time and place. However, according to them, certain rights have yet to be resolved, mainly working conditions concerning working hours, privacy issues and the control by employer, technology and/or algorithm. Although participants mentioned that telework had been *a rule*, the Netherlands increased its estimated amount of TICTM share to approximately 25% (Business.gov.nl, 2020; Eurofound, 2020b).

Poland

"Digitalisation is the future."

According to all participants, digitalisation is the utilisation of modern technologies to enhance work practices and work environment. On the one hand, the fast pace transmission has opened new hope for the future that allows us to telecommute and protect our environment. On the other hand, some responses touched upon the temporary solution of TICTM, seeing it only as a method of preserving the workplace during the pandemic. Participants also highlighted many TICTM disadvantages accumulated during COVID-19, such as the lack of constant digital training, higher risk of data losses, work overload, requirements for expensive hardware and software, isolation, the 24/7 work trap, structural unemployment, low quality of work due to inadequate rights and precariousness. These consequences more or less correspond to the level of preparedness and digitalisation of an individual country. According to respondents, telework has been included in the Polish Labour Code, but does not comply with the pandemic situation's needs. Therefore, the Anti-Crisis Shield (ACT) was launched in order to secure remote work during a crisis. The government has also begun working to integrate remote work into provisions of the Labour Code, but it is still under the discussion (TGC, 2020). In 2020, the estimated share of TICTM was 20% of employees (European Commission, 2020). In terms of digitalisation level, Poland is sixth least developed country in the EU-27 with an even lower level of integration of digital technologies, despite the fact that the ACT regulation obliges employers to provide any necessary equipment (Eurofound, 2020b).

Portugal

"It is necessary to be attentive, informed, trained and to seek support from your trade unions."

Even though none of the participants' priorities matched, they saw many advantages to the digitalisation of employment, such as less physical presence at work, more freedom and faster communication via technological means. The challenge for participants was to use the opportunity of a rapid transition to improve knowledge and skills about digital tools and innovations. Additionally, participants stated that digitalisation, teleworking and the development of new virtual jobs posed threats between trade unions and workers because they created a gap of affiliation between them. Participants also stated that TICTM was imposed whenever possible, allowing Portugal to fall sixth in the ranking of the estimated share with almost 40% of employees engaging in TICTM (Eurofound, 2020b). However, Portugal is below average in terms of digitalisation (European Commission, 2020). Participants stressed that the system was not prepared for such a fast transition, even from a legal perspective, to secure employees' rights during TICTM (Garrigues, 2020; L&E Global, 2020). Therefore, they suggested improving their collective bargaining in tripartite meetings to ensure that all measures that they consider relevant to defend teleworkers' rights would be taken into account in the future negotiations.

Republic of Cyprus

"We need to face realities, and since digitalization will become an important factor both in our work environment and life, as well as in the wider social sphere, we need to tackle problems, minimize risks and create prospects in order to make it as friendly as possible, both for employees and enterprises, as well as for consumers themselves."

Participants determined digitalisation as a necessary step towards modernisation, which has to be regulated during the implementation journey in a socially appropriate and just manner because it can be used in favour of employers against working people's interests. Since digitalisation constitutes reality, they believed that the only chance to ensure that workers are benefiting from the transition is for trade unions to become a part of the solution, supporting in the development of a just and balanced framework in which employees would be able to improve productivity and enjoy work-life balance in the regulated labour market. According to them, there are always threats presented in an unknown reality, including employers' approach to digitalisation as a way to deregulate the labour market, minimise labour costs and increase profits. They also raised awareness to the fact that digitalisation is not gender-inclusive, and both agreed on the support of the virtual labour market to be 'gender-equal' as their fifth priority. They highlighted that, without a social strategy, the transition to a digital economy would be very problematic for the workforce and there are crucial preconditions for this transition to assure the working and social rights of the more vulnerable parts of society. Additionally, both indicated that their third priority was 'healthy environment' during remote work, with the implementation of 'digital training' coming in as the eighth priority. Despite the mandatory telework and few digital initiatives, such as platforms depicting the spread of COVID-19 and call centres, there is no proposed digital strategy to improve the Cypriot ranking from the bottom five countries in digitalisation (Eurofound, 2020b; Financial Mirror, 2020).

Romania

"Digital literacy is a must. Reskilling, upskilling is not optional. Know your rights and fight for them! Don't be trapped in the class of unskilled people!"

Romanian unionists classified digitalisation as a change in work due to the introduction of digital technologies to which the workforce and trade unions have to adapt with the evolution of human society. The digitalisation of employment, according to them, has forced the working society to change the way they think and open up new opportunities to work from different places, creating a more inclusive environment, especially for persons with disabilities. However, they are also aware of the disadvantages, including the fact that it can lead to a higher level of exploitation of workers and abuses as well as increasing inequalities and polarization. Unfortunately, none of the priorities coincided among all participants. However, the majority chose 'digital rights' as their first priority, stating that there were many initiatives launched by trade unions to deliver the right to disconnect and regulations concerning the work-life balance, working hours and pay for extra hours. Respondents also stated that the government distributed grants to employers to provide employees with necessary equipment given that the estimated share of TICTM was more than 20%, and that Romania is ranked among the three lowest countries in terms of digitalisation (Eurofound, 2020b; European Commission, 2020). Participants also mentioned that there were changes in legislation to ensure a smooth transition towards TICTM. The government allocated tablets for students to support households in which online learning has taken place among other initiatives (Romania Insider, 2020). However, this step forward can be considered effective and efficient in terms of the preparedness of the future workforce and can decrease a substantial digital gap between Romania and other member states, but only if students already obtain basic digital skills. Romania is further left behind as it ranks second least developed in terms of digital human capital.

Slovakia

"Digital transition should have a reasonable speed, not rush headlong without assessing the overall impact on workers' lives."

Although all participants understand digitalisation as *progress* towards a higher qualification, better salary evaluation, access to knowledge and information, transparency and shorter working hours, respondents were also aware that the fast transition has not provided enough time to transform employees' skills and prepare them for such a turbulent situation. They were also particularly concerned about the loss of social contact and isolation as it can significantly impact society. Moreover, they highlighted that the EU is currently facing significant disparities, such as inaccessibility of the internet, socially vulnerable groups without computers and relatively insufficient level of digital education. Therefore, their first priorities are to ensure 'digital rights,' as well as inclusion of digital skills into the 'curricula'. According to participants, the government, on the one hand, modified the Labour Code and determined clear and straightforward conditions that employers must respect. The government distinguished the difference between *home-office* and *telework*: the *home-office* is utilised occasionally and has determined workplace, whereas *telework* uses digital technologies necessary for the job regardless of place (Národný Inšpektorát Práce, 2020). On the other hand, in terms of digital support provided, some respondents mentioned that the government left the workforce behind and, in many cases, did not even provide adequate financial compensation for survival. Slovakia is far from achieving the average level of digitalisation, and its estimated TICTM share for 2020 ranked the third from the bottom, around 20% (Eurofound, 2020b). At the beginning of 2021, the government commenced planning a recovery plan in the area of digitalisation (Euractive, 2021).

Slovenia

"In all aspects of our life, digitalisation is inevitable and brings many opportunities and positive developments, but it also has its downsides that we have to pay attention to, address them properly and prevent negative consequences in advance. It is essential to acquire and upgrade digital skills, digital practices and be open to lifelong digital learning."

As is already evident from the above quote, the respondent's first priority is appropriate 'digital training,' followed by the implementation of digital skills into 'early curricula' to prepare the future workforce. However, he commented that some priorities impact each other, thus he would consider them all to be equal in terms of importance. For him, the digitalisation of employment means an immense change in how we work, live and engage in society. On the one hand, there are many advantages, such as allowing the worker to perform tasks more effectively with less effort, which created added value and provided a professional and private life balance. On the other hand, there is a threat that there will not be enough capacity to follow the development of digital technologies by the workforce, which can cause loss of jobs, security and surveillance issues, invasion of privacy, hyperconnectivity, lack of social contact, health and safety risks during remote work, and infrastructure and gender inequalities. In terms of digital rights, he mentioned that his trade union is involved in securing legal provisions in employment contracts and collective agreements related to working times, the right to disconnect and ensuring necessary equipment during telework. From his point of view, the government did not provide enough digital support to the workforce, apart from promoting remote work and online education as well as financial subsidies to those who had to stay at home with children. If we consider that Slovenia is slightly below average in digitalisation but has an acceptable level of human capital, these initiatives could provide a fundamental platform for Slovenia's digitalisation progress, subsequently creating better conditions for TICTM (European Commission, 2020; Slovenia Times, 2020).

Spain

"We must be vigilant and make sure that digitization will benefit workers over employers."

A majority of participants identified the 'closure of the digital gap' as their main priority. In addition to this main priority, it was also vital for them to promote digitalisation in politics, society, economy and work based on democratic and equitable principles and ensuring the participation of the social partners and civil society. As one of primary benefits, among many, they saw the vast opportunity provided by digital media to improve the processes of information, communication, and trade union organisation. Even though Spain is above average in digitalisation, participants stated that it would be difficult for some people to adapt new tools, mostly workers of an advanced age who are left out of the labour market without further support and training from the government and/or companies (European Commission, 2020). Moreover, they reached a national agreement within the framework of tripartite social dialogue to regulate telework as well as the coverage of extra costs by companies. In the decree, telework is determined as *remote work,* meaning that at least 30% of the total working hours were completed remotely and lasts within three months (Parakar, 2020). Although TICTM has never been a common method in Spain as the workforce prefers a sociable office, Spain had the fourth highest estimated share of employees engaging in remote work, more or less 50% (Eurofound, 2020b; Zuil, 2020).

Sweden

"See it as a possibility but be aware and prepared that it can be misused."

Swedish unionists perceived digitalisation as a *challenge* to existing working methods, requiring more extensive capacities in education and support. The main priorities varied from securing 'digital rights' to promoting 'healthy environment' during TICTM. However, all participants were particularly concerned about a decrease of employees in the labour market due to digitalisation, which could be triggered by an increase in the unemployment rate from 6% in January to almost 10% in June 2020 (Trading Economics, 2020). Interestingly, the majority of participants stated that there has been digital support provided by the government and companies over the past several years. Therefore, the workforce who could work from home was already prepared when COVID-19 hit. This is also evident from the country's digital development status, which is ranked as the second most advanced (European Commission, 2020). Some participants stated that the pandemic was handled in a slightly different way from other countries, given policies and laws were shifted to self-regulation, recommendations, mutual trust, and expertise as opposed to restriction, measure, closure, and top-down control.

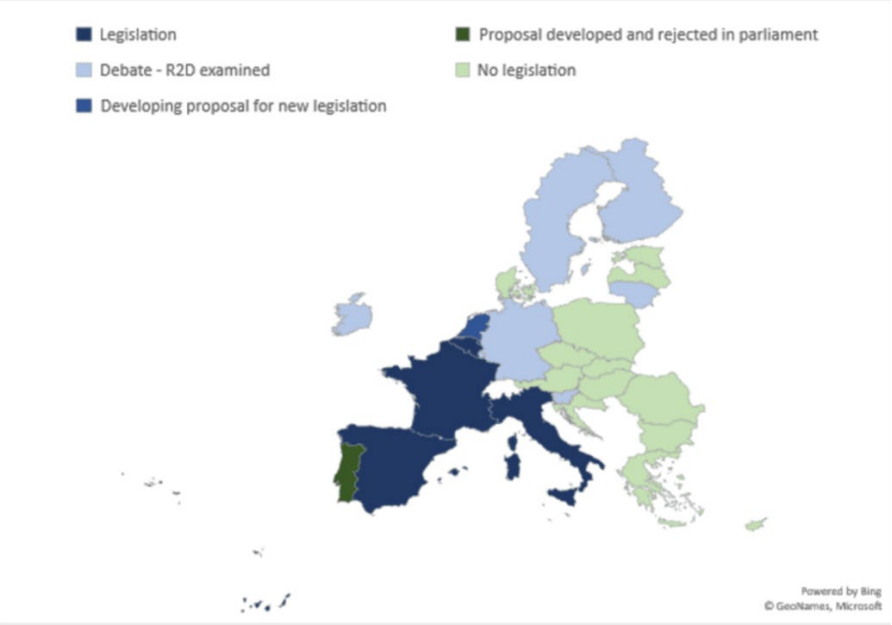
4.3. Supporting literature findings

The profound increase in TICTM has made the world more accessible thanks to persistent interconnection, interaction, and exchanges that have supported the way citizens can pursue their career. Amongst European trade unions, many believe that the pandemic has challenged many workers during their adjustments to the virtual working environment, which undermines the traditional employment models due to undetermined borders of controlled time and place (Bergrath and Ivascu, 2020; ETUC, 2020c; Schmidt and Komoróczki, 2020; Studničná, 2020; Počivavšek and Samm, 2020). As there are not many studies or the EESC Workers' Group opinions published about the interconnection between TICTM and COVID-19, this section used those opinions which instead covered digitalisation during the COVID-19 crisis. These secondary sources supported the above-mentioned findings and helped to better understand the European trade unions' complex vision of reality in relation to TICTM.

The digital rights provide clear, strict and straightforward boundaries for citizens at work. Today's rapid digitalisation pace demands correlation alongside the rapid development of European legislation (Počivavšek and Samm, 2020). There should be set fundamental standards to provide a balanced and uniform basis of rights at the EU level (Studničná, 2020). The adaptation and strengthening of legislation should assist the workforce in a just transition and protect their extensive production of personal data during telework. The TICTM rights include skill development rights, the right to disconnect and the right to healthy and safe environment, and must be steadily reviewed in line with digital progress beyond the current transition situation. It is worth mentioning that while writing this

paper, Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) were calling for the right to disconnect on the EU level (European Parliament, 2020). As Figure 10 shows, only four countries currently have legislation for the right to disconnect, and eight launched a debate. However, there is still no debate in 13 member states as either TICTM is perceived to be sufficient, or they prefer to secure the work-life balance through collective bargaining. The right to disconnect is recognised by unions as the cornerstone to achieving fundamental TICTM rights that can set a boundary between one's professional and personal life (Riso, 2020; Samm, 2019; Wergas Llave and Weber, 2020). The above investigation of individual countries showed that most European trade unions faced struggles in negotiations to ensure TICTM rights for workers, even though action was required more than ever to ensure quality and decent remote work in the middle of the COVID-19 crisis.

Figure 10. Right to disconnect, EU-27



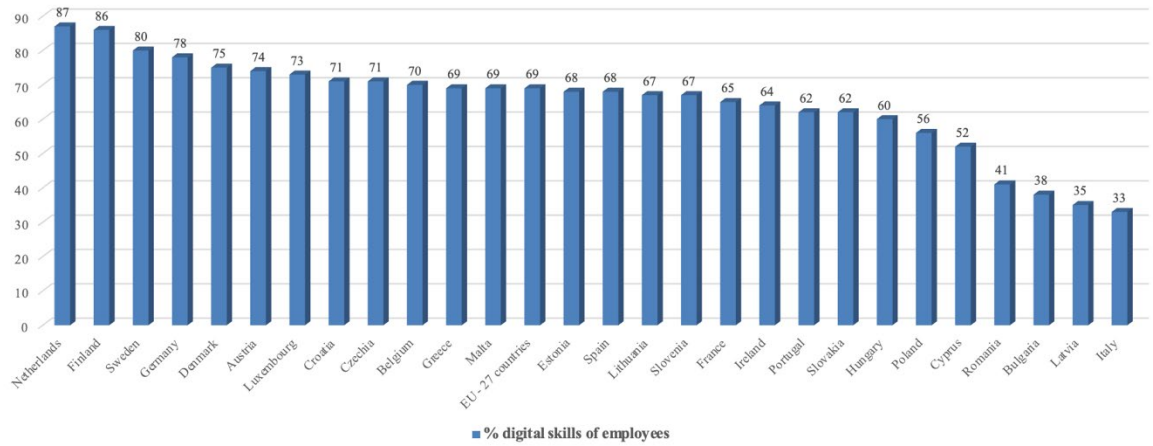
Source: Social Europe, 2020.

The shift to TICTM has opened a debate to determine and implement new criteria for the measurement of individual performance as the enforcement on limits to working hours and rest periods is more difficult than ever, which also leads to more intrusive monitoring system and surveillance. In the public discourse, monitoring management practice has a more positive connotation than surveillance; monitoring is related only to activities at work, whereas surveillance creates more of a privacy issue and violates an individual's autonomy (Bell, 2010; McNall and Stanton, 2011; Torpey, 2007; Zubroff, 2019). The immense increase in the number of people engaging in TICTM during the pandemic has also raised awareness among employers to implement less conventional technologies, such as location-sensing, radio-frequency identification, biometrics and many more that are continuously developing (Garcia del Riego, 2020). Muller (2020) points out that despite the argument that these methods could help to prove a worker's autonomous capability, they are still considered as an invasion of privacy. Therefore, the call by MEPs for the implementation of the right to disconnect could be a compromise and solution for both employers to have adequate control and employees to maintain a healthy work-life balance. However, the uncontrollable evolution of new technologies will probably always be seen by unions as a possible threat to the invasion of workers' privacy. The new strategies of social and labour standards have to be implemented with the possibility of flexible development in accordance with the proliferation of digital technologies.

Digital skills must be developed in parallel to the digitalisation levels of each member state. Even though a lack of basic digital skills proved to be an issue among 46% of employees in the EU-27 in 2015, it only decreased by 2% in 2019 (Greif and Hannes, 2015; European Commission, 2015; Eurostat, 2019). While Figure 11 shows that the most developed country was the Netherlands, with almost a 90% in basic and advanced digital skills, only 30% of workers had these skills in Italy prior to the pandemic.

A just transition that maximizes benefits and prevents disruptions can be delivered if the labour force is skilled and well-prepared in the digital environment (Bergrath and Ivasçu, 2020; Studničná, 2020). Počivavšek and Samm (2020) add that with an increasing offer and demand of distance learning and on-site education, the equipment of workers with the appropriate digital skills could prove the key to being prepared for digital life and creating trust among citizens. It is evident that training, re-skilling and upskilling programmes are needed and must be adequately implemented with particular regard to workers with disabilities, vulnerable groups, workers of an advanced age, and scheme adaptation to any other individuals in respect to their specific level of digital skills.

Figure 11. (%) Digital skills of employees, 2019



Source: Author's own elaboration; European Commission, 2020; Eurostat, 2019.

Alongside the changing work environment during the pandemic, there has also (temporarily) been a shift within the education system towards distance learning. The general education and training of learners of all ages will not only equip them with essential digital knowledge, such as a digital etiquette, but also contribute to their transition and progression in terms of career and wages (CEDEFOP, 2019; ETUC, 2020b; Počivavšek and Samm, 2020; Studničná, 2020). The integration of digital skills to vocational training is an integral part of digitalisation as it can provide an equal starting point for all citizens and prepare them for the future evolution of digital jobs. CEDEFOP (2019) highlights that special guidance should be incorporated with regard to those who cannot study independently or are not digitally equipped. Babrauskienė (2020) adds that the training has to be seen as a supplementary tool to teaching method instead of as a way to fully digitalise education because the EU system is not prepared for such a radical transition outside of the context of the pandemic. The transition of the education system to the virtual environment has created countless opportunities for workers to conduct further studies online, especially since universities have adapted to cyberspace and many training and courses have become more accessible and affordable.

The COVID-19 pandemic has shown that digitalisation is a crucial asset to societal resilience and enterprise continuity. Therefore, according to Schmidt and Komoróczki (2020), a broad dialogue should be examined about securing a basic digital infrastructure for all citizens in order to benefit from the opportunities that the virtual workplace offers. The research covered by the International Telecommunication Union (2021) argues that the digital divide caused by inappropriately served broadband infrastructure can create an obstacle not only for workers who must undertake their daily tasks online, but can also limit the development of digital literacy in general (TUAC, 2017). The crucial need to close the gap of regional and wealth disparities is a *conditio sine qua non* if no worker is to be left behind and everybody is to be supported through the digital transition (Bergrath and Ivasçu, 2020; Počivavšek and Samm, 2020).

The main obstacle during the pandemic was observed from the perspective of readiness since most European countries were not prepared for a virtually overnight transition towards the 'new normal' from the social, technical and legal perspective.

5. Discussion

It is worth noting that several findings in this research reinforced results from previous studies that have examined TICTM during COVID-19 which highlighted workers' increased virtual interaction and connection accompanied by social isolation and worry while maintaining a balance between their private and professional life (Chong and Chang, 2020; Belzunegui-Eraso and Erro-Garcés, 2020; Borteyrou and Hodzic, 2020; ILO, 2020). Although the researcher asked targeted questions about gender equality, inclusiveness of disabled people and environmental benefits, there were no contributions detected. However, there were various unique observations and substantial findings explicitly related to workers' behaviour that will be discussed in further detail below.

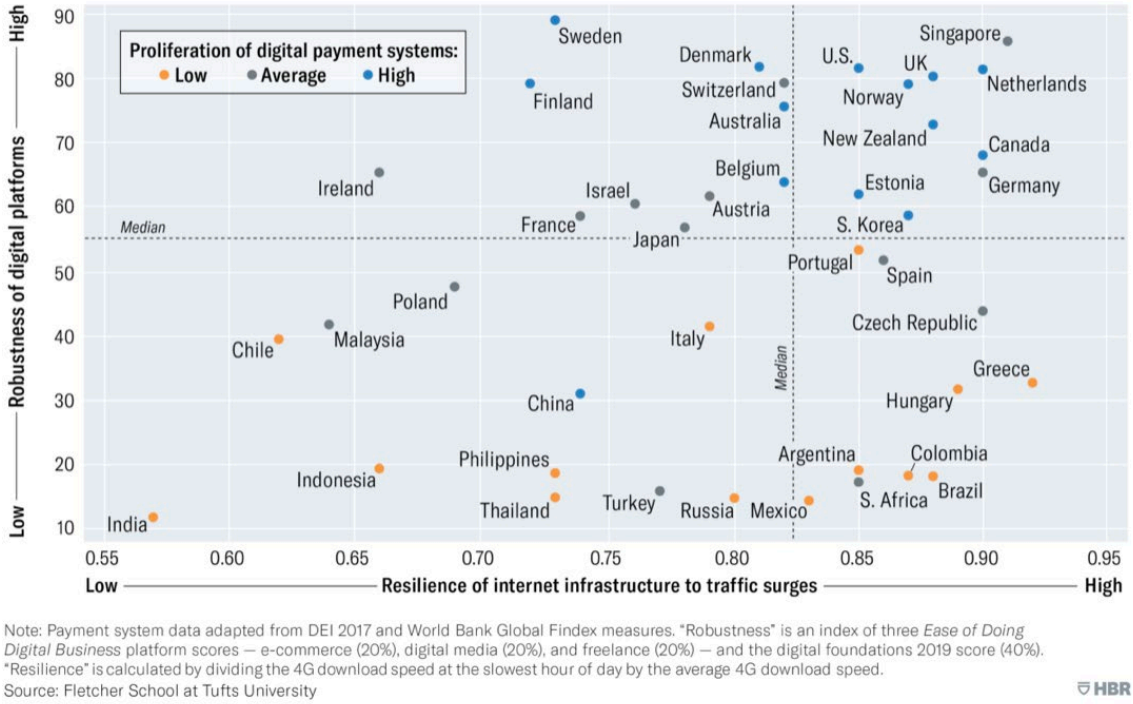
Adaptation to the new normal

TICTM was generally seen by participants as an adoption to a new virtual work environment using digital technologies during the pandemic (Belzunegui-Eraso and Erro-Garcés, 2020; ILO, 2020). However, based on unionists' statements, the 'adaptation to the new normal' varied based on a country's situation before the COVID-19 crisis, especially in regards to the digitalisation level. Even though the researcher did not send any statistics about TICTM, digitalisation or digital skills to participants before the interview or survey, many of their statements referenced the digitalisation level of the country and how the overnight transition either lightened the burden or created an obstacle for workers' 'adaptation to the new normal', as seen in 'Elaboration of member states' section.

The article written by Chakravorti and Chaturvedi (2020) investigates the readiness of countries and highlights that the EU overall was not ready, with some exceptions, compared to the USA, especially in terms of internet infrastructure. Figure 12 shows countries' readiness measured by the level of digital payments, internet infrastructure and digital platforms. However, this paper notes that there were also other elements to consider; for example, the level of digital skills and social partners' reactions to the COVID-19 situation, including the right to telework, digital strategy of a country and the right to disconnect. Additionally, Finland was considered the most advanced country in terms of digitalisation in 2020 (Figure 9), in percentage of workers on TICTM prior COVID-19 (Figure 4), and in workers' transition to TICTM as a result of the pandemic (Figure 5). The interrelation between the digitalisation level of country (Figure 9) and the amount of workers engaging in TICTM (Figure 5) is applicable to most EU-27 countries. Among the most digitalised with the above average levels of TICTM are Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Ireland, Luxembourg, Netherlands and Sweden, whereas those countries below the digital average had the smallest TICTM proportion of workers who started teleworking due to COVID-19, including Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Greece, Hungary, Latvia, Poland, Republic of Cyprus, Romania and Slovakia. The rest of the member states do not obtain such a relationship, and further research is required as there could be other influencing factors. Therefore, from the above explanation, it is evident that the more a digitalised a country is, the more likely workers started teleworking as a result of COVID-19, and vice versa. This study argues that country readiness for mass TICTM can be measured by the digital skills of the workforce. Thus, social partners should pay special attention to continuous digital training and the education of workers if they want to increase societal resilience and enterprise continuity in the future.

The 'adaptation to the new normal' played a crucial role for the workforce in terms of the preparedness of their country given that workers could access digital means, digital training and benefit overall from the digital strategy of a member state at the beginning of COVID-19. Therefore, these three elements are recognised as game-changers for workers who had to adapt to the virtual work environment overnight.

Figure 12. Preparedness of countries to work from a distance



Note: Payment system data adapted from DEI 2017 and World Bank Global Findex measures. "Robustness" is an index of three *Ease of Doing Digital Business* platform scores — e-commerce (20%), digital media (20%), and freelance (20%) — and the digital foundations 2019 score (40%). "Resilience" is calculated by dividing the 4G download speed at the slowest hour of day by the average 4G download speed.
Source: Fletcher School at Tufts University

HBR

Source: Chakravorti and Chaturvedi, 2020.

Moral uncertainty

Although there was a small percentage of TICTM recorded before the pandemic, the emotional consequences were already well known, such as the blurred barriers between professional and private life, which caused stress and social isolation (Eurofound, 2020c; Kaplan and Vega, 2015; Mann and Holdsworth, 2003; McIlvaine, 2019). However, only a few research pieces highlight the consequences of TICTM on workers during COVID-19 specifically, such as increased autonomy, exclusion and mistrust (European Commission, 2020; ILO, 2020; Muller, 2020).

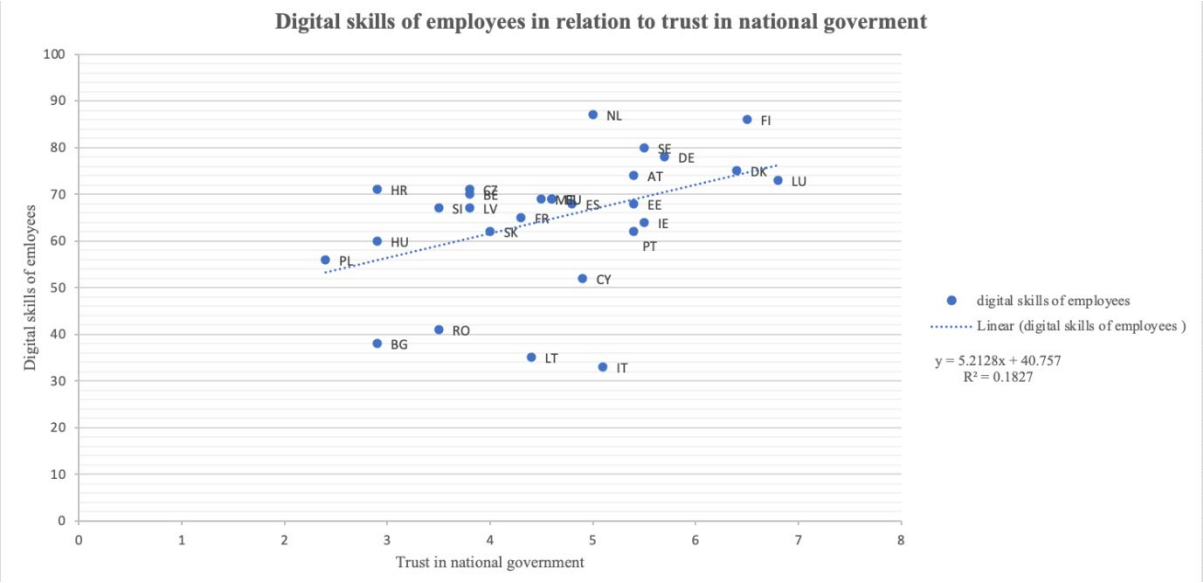
Many participants stated that there was an enormous fear among workers who switched to TICTM for the first time, due to lack of understanding of digital technologies and an insufficient level of digital skill. As only 56% of workers obtain basic digital skills, the implementation of digital training and support was needed immediately by each country after the start of the COVID-19 pandemic (European Commission, 2020). Although all respondents provided statements regarding different governmental policies to combat the COVID-19 pandemic, the trust in government also played a crucial role during the implementation procedure. Eurofound (2020c) argues that the satisfaction level of citizens was higher in countries where trust in national government was above EU-27 average. This paper adds that the trust in the national government was also shaped by the digital skills of employees. Figure 13 shows the interrelation between digital skills of employees in EU-27 countries prior COVID-19 and trust in national government during the pandemic. There is an apparent connection between these two elements. Therefore, more digitally skilled workers felt more comfortable, experienced less technological stress and less anxiousness because they knew how to proceed with TICTM, allowing them to focus on their productivity and work-life balance. Although the Netherlands obtains the highest rank in terms of employees' digital skills, the data reflects a lower level of national trust than in Finland. The least trust in government is observed in Poland, a country where trade unionists were some of the most pessimistic about TICTM. This paper contributes that digitally skilled workers had higher trust in the government's decisions during COVID-19, and therefore felt more morally certain and satisfied.

While one may argue that a country's level of digital skills is developed over a specific period of time, trust in national government can change quickly depending on many factors, such as the implementation of new policies, the COVID-19 crisis or newly elected members of the government. Webb and Webb

(1897) insist that "*Trade Unions are democracies: that is to say, their internal constitutions are all based on the principle of "government of the people by the people for the people"'; and they also defined unions as 'a necessary element in the democratic state.*" In other words, trade unions are, according to them, a crucial vehicle of democratisation, which is seen as a long-term development rather than an emotional reaction to a particular situation. Besides, many participants affiliated the mistrust in government with a violation of democratic values due to undermining of working conditions and digital rights. Figure 14 shows the linear regression between the digital skills of workers and the Democracy Index in 2019. Denmark, Finland and Netherlands have the most digitally skilled workforce with strong democracy, whereas there is a low level of digital skills with relatively weak democratic values in Romania and Bulgaria. This outcome also corresponds to participants' statements regarding the TICTM situation during COVID-19. Finland, Netherlands and Denmark were considered to be highly digitalised countries prepared for the TICTM transition, whereas Romania and Bulgaria were left behind and struggled. Even though there is a visible interrelation between the two variables, future research is required to determine further factors. The European trade unions saw digital skills and training as one of the critical pillars to keeping up with the pace of global digitalisation and, at the same time, as an enormous threat for the future of labour. This study argues that digital skills play an integral part in workforce satisfaction in relation to democratic values in modern society.

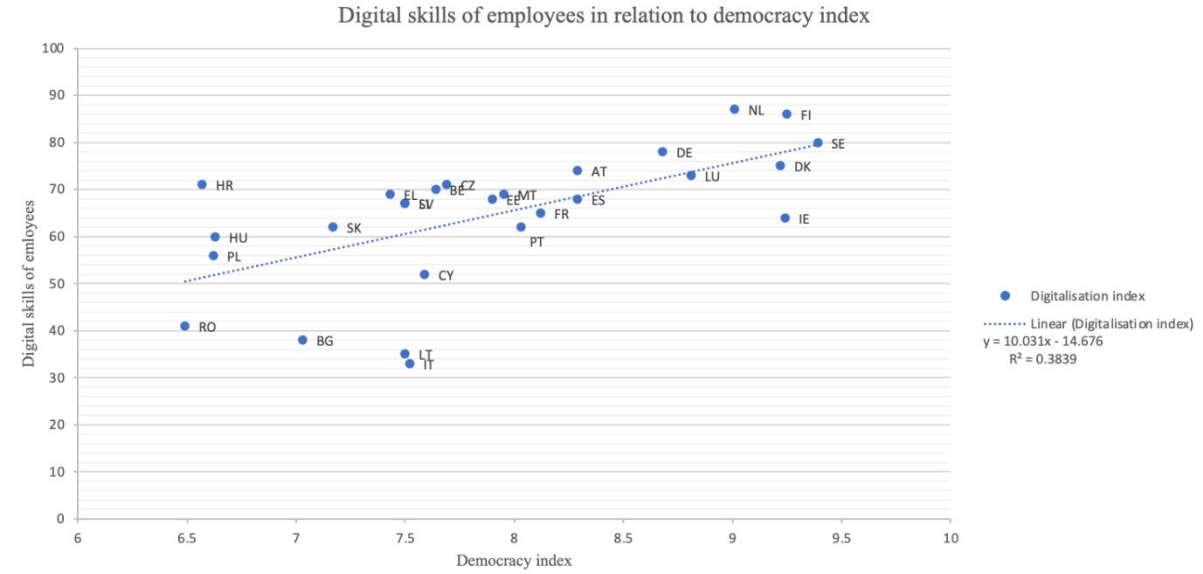
The COVID-19 pandemic has led us into uncharted waters, requiring governments to make rapid decisions concerning lockdowns, social-distancing and other restrictions and measures. Each country was left to their own devices, which impacted how we live, work and behave. Moral uncertainty was observed throughout the Union as a whole, and although this was applicable at different contextual levels, COVID-19 has created a dichotomy between those prepared before the pandemic who were able to benefit and those who were not and were left behind.

Figure 13. Interrelation between digital skills of employees, 2019 & trust in national government during COVID-19



Source: Author's own elaboration; Eurofound, 2020b; Eurostat, 2019.

Figure 14. Interrelation between digital skills of employees, 2019 & Democracy Index, 2020



Source: Author's own elaboration; The Economist Intelligence Unit, 2020; Eurostat, 2019.

Digital movement

Although EESC members of the Workers' Group delivered various opinions in terms of COVID-19 and digitalisation (Bergrath and Ivașcu, 2020; Fornea and Mazzola, 2020; Počivavšek and Samm, 2020; Schmidt and Komoróczki, 2020; Studničná, 2020), almost no part of the opinions touched upon the issue of telework in 2020. However, it is worth noting that there are two opinions on this topic to be delivered in March, 2021 (Angelova and Koller, 2021; Trindade, 2021). All respondents called for decent and quality telework throughout all member states, as according to them, we are now in a turbulent situation, where workers' rights can be undermined, especially in cases where there is limited digital education for the workforce and/or they are device-less (ETUC, 2020).

Lucie Studničná (2020) argues that member states' legislations are fragmented and there is no unified standard of European rights that would support workers in each country. Počivavšek and Samm (2020) add that European legislation has to keep track of digitalisation as many technological developments are introduced daily. While participants considered TICTM to be a result of modernisation and progress, which can provide countless opportunities and flexibility, they also highlighted that the appropriate regulation is required. The European Parliament's (2020) recent discussion about the right to disconnect could be a step forwards for other digital rights to become EU-wide fundamental rights, including the right to telework or the right to adequate digital equipment. The definition of work, according to Lexico (2021) is an "*activity involving mental or physical effort done in order to achieve a purpose or result*." However, there is no predetermined place because work is *something we do*, not *somewhere we go* (Lexico, 2021). Therefore, this study contributes to the aforementioned statements that a minimum standard of digital rights at the EU level will not only allow for an overall increase in digitalisation due to the fact that TICTM would become standard and/or an alternative to physical work organisation, but it will also allow workers to have decent and quality conditions. This will grant workers the freedom to conduct work remotely, regardless of location, which could be considered as the 'virtual free movement of workers.'

The COVID-19 pandemic has sharpened employees' different levels of digital skills throughout the whole Union as a result of the mass transition to TICTM. Tatjana Babrauskienė (2020) argues that while our education has experienced a digital transition, schools will always have an essential social role to play in our evolution. Počivavšek and Samm (2020) add that the incorporation of digital skills into Vocational Education and Training is crucial in order to equip our present and future workforce with the right tools, which are already needed now. In the case of COVID-19, countries should pay special attention to their policies' impacts on teleworkers, who desperately need digital support. For example, participants stated that their countries bought tablets or other digital means regardless of the digital skills level of population. On the one hand, it is assumed that this will increase the digitalisation level in the near future. On the other hand, it can be considered an ineffective and dangerous policy if the household, which received the digital device, lacks a basic understanding of its function. Therefore, the second unique finding of the 'digital movement' theoretical code is that TICTM can continuously equip the workforce with digital skills only if further educational support is provided on a national and/or EU level.

Bergrath and Ivașcu (2020) highlight that the Union has to increase its progress in digitalisation and close the gap because "*while other economic powers are investing in 6G technologies, we are talking about a strategy for 5G networks*". Schmidt and Komoróczki (2020) add that the pandemic has resulted in many opportunities and challenges presented by digital communication and has strengthened the regional gap between rural and urban areas. Regarding participants' statements, the enormous differences among member states have created a divide between those who were able to participate in TICTM and enjoy benefits provided by certain infrastructures, and those who were left behind and thus were excluded from the digital age. Therefore, the pandemic has strengthened the gap between opportunities for workers to participate in TICTM during the pandemic if they were considered either overloaded with digital technologies or device-less.

Our society has experienced the fastest transition in our evolution, regardless of people's skills needed for productive and efficient work outcome. Paradoxically, when the freedom of movement was restricted due to the COVID-19 pandemic in the whole Union, the workforce could, to some extent, enjoy the 'virtual free movement,' which depended on whether they were considered digitally overloaded or device-less.

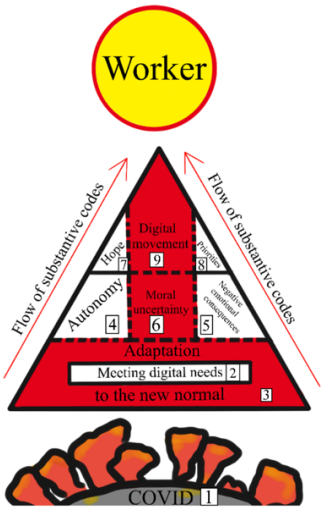
6. Findings

This chapter reports the findings of the study using Figure 15 with labels 1 – 9 to incorporate the substantive theory to investigate how TICTM has shaped workers' behaviour throughout the pandemic from the perspective of European trade unions.

(1) A *global war* against the COVID-19 pandemic impacted how we work, live and engage in society.
(2) The fragmented preparedness of member states created unequal opportunities for the workforce, given that workers had uneven access to digital means, digital training and the extent to which they could benefit overall from the digital strategy of their countries.
(3) This paper stresses that the readiness of countries can be measured by the level of digital skills, arguing that the more digitalised a country was prior to the pandemic, the more likely workers were to start to telework as a result of COVID-19, and therefore the more societally resilient member state was.
(4) The freedom from the shackles of traditional employment models, strengthened by national restrictions, reinforced workers' autonomous capability to benefit from the 'virtual free movement' and enabled them to seek novel opportunities regardless of timing and location.
(5) The European trade unions pointed out that workers' feelings of uncertainty, chaos, precariousness and unpredictability were dependent on the average level of human capital in individual member states.
(6) Democratic values and overall trust in the national government are part and parcel of the workforce's satisfaction. This study argues that these two elements were also shaped by digital skills of employees, emphasising that workers with an above-average level human capital could focus on their efficiency and work-life balance without experiencing enormous technological stress and anxiousness, and therefore felt more certain with national decisions and restrictions during COVID-19.
(7) All European trade unions expressed their hope to navigate their workforce towards modernisation as safely and effectively as possible, which invigorated their need to fight for the preservation of workers' rights and defend decent employment.
(8) The first priority throughout all European trade unions was 'digital rights'. This study contributes to the existing literature by arguing that a uniform basis of rights at the EU level would support the normalisation of TICTM as an alternative to the traditional organisation of work, with an added value of decent and quality working conditions.
(9) Although the pandemic strengthened the gap between those considered as overloaded with digital technologies and those who were device-less, the solution of equipping households that lack a basic understanding of digital skills with digital means is dangerous and ineffective if no further training is secured.

The mass transition of the workforce to TICTM has taught us an important lesson and shaped our mind-set towards a more digitalised alternative, free from the shackles of traditional employment models. Therefore, this thesis intends to contribute to the substantive area of research by arguing that the preparedness of individual member states played a crucial role in workers' trust in national government and the extent to which the European workforce was able to benefit from TICTM.

Figure 15. Findings: Model of the TICTM factors



Source: Author's own elaboration.

Conclusion

Despite its limitations, this research sought to investigate whether and how the workforce engaged with TICTM as they settled into their 'new normal' environment and how TICTM has shaped their experiences from the perspective of European trade unions through a grounded theory method. This work was done with the aim of generating a theoretical model of behavioural factors, investigated via data collected from 74 participants and by using constructivist GT. Three theoretical codes emerged from the data and were mapped into a behavioural model. This study emphasised the empirical analysis of understanding what participants' beliefs were like in the digital age and how TICTM forms and develops workers' experiences towards the COVID-19 crisis. The supporting literature provided a platform to develop a substantive theory from theoretical codes.

This research provided new insight into the virtual work organisation with respect to how TICTM is adopted by and accommodated into the EU workforce. With reference to novel findings, the study drew attention to the relation between country readiness and increased TICTM, highlighted the workforce's digital skills level and took into account social partners' reactions to COVID-19. Uncertainty, chaos, precariousness and unpredictability dominated workers' feelings during TICTM, and were also reflected in the trust of the national government when new measures were enforced.

It is important to note that outside of the novel findings, the majority of results that reinforce the existing literature are consistent with what we already know. Hence, two key points are worthy of consideration: the added value of the massive increase of TICTM has ensured the inclusion of people with disabilities and highlighted the beneficial connection between digitalisation and the environment. Based on this, digitalisation can provide many valuable benefits for our society if we give it the opportunity to do so.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Interview guide

Introduction

1. Can you tell me something about yourself? (1)
2. What does digitalisation mean for you personally? (1)
3. How has your government responded to the pandemic in terms of employment? (1)

Main part

4. What are the primary changes in employment during Covid-19? (1)
5. In your view, in what terms the digitalisation is important for the workforce? (2)
6. Which industry was the most damaged during Covid-19 in your point of view? (2)
7. How has the position towards digitalisation changed from the perspective of European Trade Unionist during the pandemic? (2)
8. How do workers understand digitalisation? Is there a lack of understanding, for example, in privacy and usage of personal data? (3)
9. Can you give me an example(s) how the digitalisation increased employee's well-being during Covid? (4)
10. From the point of European Trade Unionist, how have workers reacted to the lack of social contact? (2)
11. What are the impacts on young employment during the pandemic? (2)
12. How the digitalisation can help to achieve gender equality? (2)
13. What are the threats of digital social transformation? (2)
14. Can you elaborate digital security paradigm during Covid-19? (1)
15. How the digitalisation shaped health and safety of workforce during the pandemic? (1)
16. How are digital skills necessary for new jobs during a crisis? (2)
17. How can we provide with digital skills to the older workforce? (2)
18. How the EU digital sovereignty shifted during the pandemic? (8)
19. What application come to your mind when it comes to Covid-19? (1)
20. What is your opinion about monitoring and recruitment software of workers? (9)
21. Which industry was the most damaged during Covid-19 in your point of view? (1)
22. Can you give examples how the digitisation has impacted/shaped the employment in these industries? (2)
23. Can you propose a strategy how would you achieve the balance between creating and eliminating jobs by the digitalisation? (2)
24. How protection for all workers would look like? (7)
25. Can you elaborate the digital divide in the EU during Covid-19? (2)
26. Is there a link between the digitalisation and environment? If yes, can you elaborate on this connection? (6)

Closing Notes

27. Can you think about one statement that you would like to say to our EU workforce regarding the digitalisation? (1)
28. Do you have any additional statement you would like to add to this interview? (1)

Appendix 2: EN Survey

Workers' Group Survey

1. **Are you male of female?**
   Select one answer
   Woman
   Man
2. **Which category best represents your age?**

Select one answer
18 – 25
26 – 35
36 – 45
46 – 55
56 – 65
66 – 75
76+

3. **Are you a member of the Workers' Group?**
Select one answer
Yes
No

4. **What Member State are you from?**
Select one answer
Austria
Belgium
Bulgaria
Croatia
Republic of Cyprus
Czech Republic
Denmark
Estonia
Finland
France
Germany
Greece
Hungary
Ireland
Italy
Latvia
Lithuania
Luxembourg
Malta
Netherlands
Poland
Portugal
Romania
Slovakia
Slovenia
Spain
Sweden

5. **My trade union is from a different Member State…**
(optional) Write the name of member state below

6. **Number of mandates at the EESC**
Select one answer
1
2
3
4+

7. **If someone asks you, what digitalisation means for you as a trade unionist, what would you answer?**
Write your answer below

8. **What are the advantages and opportunities of digitalisation for employees?**
Write your answer below

9. **What are the disadvantages and threats of digitalisation for employees?**

Write your answer below

10. **My priorities as trade unionist are as follows:**
    Drag-and-drop until your preferences are sorted (1. - most important, 9. - least important)
    Enforce straightforward digital RIGHTS (right to disconnect, privacy, data, surveillance)
    Promote the employment digitalisation as beneficial for the ENVIRONMENT (paperless, no commute)
    Close the digital GAP between poor and rich people (and territorial imbalances in terms of infrastructure)
    Ensure HEALTHY environment on telework (work-life balance, psychological support, time management)
    Provide digital TRAINING to all concerning their individual needs (youth, workers in advanced age, disabled workers, self-development)
    Modification of tele-WORKING CONDITIONS (hours, training, monitoring, safety)
    Encourage my GOVERNMENT to be a digital example for all, especially workers (preparedness, modernise)
    Inclusiveness of digital skills to early childhood CURRICULA in order to prepare the future workforce
    Promote GENDER equality in the virtual labour market (be able to find a job regardless of gender)
11. **Do you have any additional comments on the above-mentioned priorities?**
    (optional) Write your answer below
12. **How has your trade union managed to secure digital means and digital support for employees during the pandemic?**
    Write your answer below
13. **Does your trade union take into account "digital rights" for employees? If yes, how? If no, what is the reason?**
    Write your answer below
14. **How can the digitalisation of employment help the environment?**
    Write your answer below
15. **How has your government supported employees during Covid-19 in terms of digitalisation?**
    Write your answer below
16. **If you had a chance to speak to all EU workforce, what would you say them regarding the digitalisation?**
    Write your answer below
17. **Do you have any additional comments or statements to this topic?**
    (optional) Write your answer below
18. **How satisfied are you with this survey (content, extent, time consumption, etc.)?**
    1 star Poor - 5 stars Excellent
19. **Please provide feedback to the author for future improvements.**
    (optional) Write your answer below

Appendix 3: FR Survey

Le sondage du groupe des travailleurs

1. **Etes-vous un homme ou une femme?**
   Choisissez une seule réponse
   Femme
   Homme
2. **Quelle catégorie représente le mieux votre âge?**
   Choisissez une seule réponse
   18 – 25
   26 – 35
   36 – 45

46 – 55
56 – 65
66 – 75
76+

3. **Êtes-vous membre du groupe des travailleurs?**
   Choisissez une seule réponse
   Oui
   Non
4. **De quel État membre venez-vous?**
   Choisissez une seule réponse
   l'Allemagne
   l'Autriche
   la Belgique
   la Bulgarie
   Chypre
   la Croatie
   le Danemark
   l'Espagne
   l'Estonie
   la Finlande
   la France
   la Grèce
   la Hongrie
   l'Irlande
   l'Italie
   la Lettonie
   la Lituanie
   le Luxembourg
   Malte
   les Pays-Bas
   la Pologne
   le Portugal
   la République tchèque
   la Roumanie
   la Slovaquie
   la Slovénie
   la Suède
5. **Mon syndicat est originaire d'un autre État membre..**
   (facultatif) Écrivez le nom de l'État membre ci-dessous
6. **Nombre de mandats au CESE**
   Choisissez une seule réponse
   1
   2
   3
   4+
7. **Si quelqu'un vous demande ce que signifie la digitalisation pour vous en tant que syndicaliste, que répondriez-vous?**
   Écrivez votre réponse ci-dessous
8. **Quels sont les avantages et les opportunités de la digitalisation pour les travailleurs?**
   Écrivez votre réponse ci-dessous
9. **Quels sont les inconvénients et les dangers de la digitalisation pour les travailleurs?**
   Écrivez votre réponse ci-dessous
10. **Mes priorités en tant que syndicaliste sont les suivantes:**
    Changez l'ordre selon vos préférences par glisser-déposer (1. - le plus important, 9. - le moins important)

Appliquer des DROITS digitaux (droit de déconnexion, confidentialité, données, surveillance)
Promouvoir la digitalisation de l'emploi comme bénéfique pour l'ENVIRONNEMENT (sans papier, pas de trajet)
Terminer l'ECART numérique entre les pauvres et les riches (et les déséquilibres territoriaux en termes d'infrastructures)
Assurer un environnement SAIN sur le télétravail (équilibre vie privée/vie professionnelle, soutien psychologique, gestion du temps)
Fournir une FORMATION digitale concernant les besoins individuels pour toute les catégories (jeûnes, travailleurs handicapés ou âgés)
Modification des CONDITIONS DE télé-TRAVAIL (horaires, formation, surveillance, sécurité)
Encourager mon GOUVERNEMENT à être un exemple dans la digitalisation pour tout le monde, en particulier les travailleurs (préparation, modernisation)
Inclusion des compétences digitales dans les PROGRAMMES des petits élèves afin de préparer la future main-d'œuvre
Promouvoir l'ÉGALITÉ entre les sexes sur le marché du travail virtuel (être en mesure de trouver un emploi quel que soit le sexe)

11. **Avez-vous des commentaires supplémentaires sur les priorités déjà mentionnées?**
    (facultatif) Écrivez votre réponse ci-dessous
12. **Comment votre syndicat a-t-il réussi à sécuriser les moyens numériques et le support digital des travailleurs pendant la pandémie?**
    Écrivez votre réponse ci-dessous
13. **Votre syndicat prend-il en compte les «droits numériques» des travailleurs? Si oui, comment? Si non, quelle en est la raison?**
    Écrivez votre réponse ci-dessous
14. **Comment la digitalisation du travail peut aider l'environnement?**
    Écrivez votre réponse ci-dessous
15. **Comment votre gouvernement a-t-il soutenu les travailleurs pendant le Covid-19 en termes de digitalisation?**
    Écrivez votre réponse ci-dessous
16. **Si vous aviez l'occasion de parler à tous les travailleurs de l'UE, que leur diriez-vous concernant la digitalisation?**
    Écrivez votre réponse ci-dessous
17. **Avez-vous des commentaires ou des déclarations supplémentaires sur le sujet du sondage?**
    Écrivez votre réponse ci-dessous
18. **A quel degré êtes-vous satisfait de ce sondage (contenu, étendue, consommation de temps, etc.)?**
    1 étoile Médiocre - 5 étoiles Excellent
19. **Veuillez fournir vos commentaires à l'auteur pour de futures améliorations.**
    (facultatif) Écrivez votre réponse ci-dessous

Appendix 4: CZ Survey

Dotazník zaměstnanecké skupiny

1. **Jaké je Vaše pohlaví?**
   Vyberte jednu odpověď
   Žena
   Muž
2. **Do jaké věkové kategorie patříte?**
   Vyberte jednu odpověď
   18 – 25
   26 – 35
   36 – 45

46 – 55
56 – 65
66 – 75
76+

3. **Jste členem/kou skupiny zaměstnanců?**
   Vyberte jednu odpověď
   Ano
   Ne
4. **Z kterého členského státu jste?**
   Vyberte jednu odpověď
   Belgie
   Bulharsko
   Česká Republika
   Dánsko
   Estonsko
   Finsko
   Francie
   Chorvatsko
   Irsko
   Itálie
   Kypr
   Litva
   Lotyšsko
   Lucembursko
   Maďarsko
   Malta
   Německo
   Nizozemsko
   Polsko
   Portugalsko
   Rakousko
   Rumunsko
   Řecko
   Slovensko
   Slovinsko
   Španělsko
   Švédsko
5. **Můj odborový svaz se nachází v jiném členském státu...**
   (volitelné) Níže napište název členského státu
6. **Počet mandátů v EHSV**
   Vyberte jednu odpověď
   1
   2
   3
   4+
7. **Pokud se Vás někdo zeptá, co pro Vás jako odboráře znamená digitalizace, co byste odpověděl/a?**
   Napište odpověď níže
8. **Jaké jsou výhody a příležitosti digitalizace pro zaměstnance?**
   Napište odpověď níže
9. **Jaké jsou nevýhody a hrozby digitalizace pro zaměstnance?**
   Napište odpověď níže
10. **Moje priority jako odboráře jsou následující:**
    Položku přetáhněte myší na požadovanou pozici své preference (1. - nejdůležitější, 9. - nejméně důležitá)

Implementovat jasná digitální PRÁVA (právo na odpojení, soukromí, data, dohled)
Podporovat digitalizaci zaměstnání jako přínos pro ŽIVOTNÍ PROSTŘEDÍ (bez papíru, bez dojíždění)
Uzavřít digitální PROPAST mezi chudými a bohatými lidmi (a územní nerovnováhu z hlediska infrastruktury)
Zajistit BEZPEČNOST a ochranu zdraví při práci z domova (rovnováha mezi pracovním a soukromým životem, psychologická podpora, řízení pracovní doby)
Poskytovat digitální ŠKOLENÍ všem s ohledem na jejich individuální potřeby (mládež, pracovníci v pokročilém věku, zdravotně postižení pracovníci)
Upravit PRACOVNÍ PODMÍNKY při dlouhodobé práci z domova (hodiny, školení, monitorování, bezpečnost)
Podpořit VLÁDU aby se stala digitálním příkladem pro všechny, zejména pracovníky (připravenost, modernizace)
Zahrnutí digitálních dovedností do STUDIJNÍCH PLÁNŮ v raném věku s cílem připravit budoucí pracovní sílu
Podporovat ROVNOST pohlaví na virtuálním trhu práce (být schopen/a najít práci bez ohledu na pohlaví)

11. **Máte nějaké další připomínky k výše uvedeným prioritám?**
    (volitelné) Napište odpověď níže
12. **Jak Váš odborový svaz zajistil digitální prostředky a digitální podporu pro zaměstnance během pandemie?**
    Napište odpověď níže
13. **Jak Vaše odborové organizace zajistila „digitální práva“ pro zaměstnance? Pokud nezajistila, jaký k tomu měla důvod?**
    Napište odpověď níže
14. **Může digitalizace v oblasti zaměstnanosti být nápomocná životnímu prostředí?**
    Napište odpověď níže
15. **Jak Vaše vláda podpořila zaměstnance v oblasti digitalizace během Covid-19?**
    Napište odpověď níže
16. **Pokud byste měli možnost hovořit ke všem pracovním silám v EU, jaké by bylo Vaše sdělení na téma digitalizace?**
    Napište odpověď níže
17. **Máte k tomuto tématu nějaké další komentáře?**
    (volitelné) Napiště odpověď níže
18. **Jak jste byli spokojeni s tímto průzkumem (obsah, rozsah, časová náročnost atd.)?**
    1 hvězdička "Nespokojenost" - 5 hvězdiček "Spokojenost"
19. **Je něco v tomto dotazníku co Vám chybělo? Napište nám Vaše náměty pro budoucí zlepšení.**
    (volitelné) Napište odpověď níže

Appendix 5: Invitation e-mail

Subject: Workers' Group Survey

EN, FR, CZ

==========

EN

Dear _____,

It is an honour to send you an invitation to participate in **the Workers' Group research** called "**Digitalisation, Employment and Covid-19**", where we analyse how has the digitalisation shaped employment during the pandemic from the perspective of the European Trade Union's representatives.

By filling out this **5 - 10 minutes survey,** you can contribute by your perspective to **the up-to-date research** about the pandemic and its **influence on employees**. There is **no requirement to have expertise in the area of digitalisation** in order to take part in this research.

Please follow this link to participate: https://www.survio.com/survey/d/G4N4H0U1G6I6X1A3F

Best wishes,

Marie Zamecnikova

==========

FR

Cher/Chère _____,

J'ai l'honneur de vous envoyer une invitation à participer à la recherche **du groupe des travailleurs** intitulée "**Digitalisation, Travail et Covid-19**", dans laquelle nous analysons comment la digitalisation a **influencé l'emploi** pendant la pandémie du point de vue des représentants des syndicats en Europe.

Par le fait de remplir ce sondage d'une durée de **5 à 10 minutes**, vous allez contribuer, par votre perspective, à la recherche sur un sujet d'actualité pour les travailleurs. **Il n'est pas nécessaire d'avoir une expérience dans le domaine de la digitalisation pour participer à cette recherche**.

Pour participer, cliquez sur ce lien: https://www.survio.com/survey/d/X3L4K1V9P9Y8N1B6H

Cordialement,

Marie Zamecnikova

==========

CZ

Vážený pane _____, / Vážená paní _____,

ráda bych Vás pozvala k účasti ve výzkumu **zaměstnanecké skupiny EHSV** pod názvem "**Digitalizace, Zaměstnanost a Covid-19"**.

Cílem tohoto projektu je zjistit, jak digitalizace **ovlivňuje zaměstnanost** během pandemie z pohledu zástupců Evropského odborového svazu. **K účasti na tomto výzkumu není třeba mít odborné znalosti v oblasti digitalizace.** Vyplnění dotazníku Vám zabere pouze několik minut.

Klikněte na tento odkaz a můžete začít: https://www.survio.com/survey/d/G9D2O7P3R6T4L9J2F

Pomozte nám analyzovat vliv digitalizace v období pandemie na zaměstnance.

Předem děkuji za Vaši pomoc a jsem s pozdravem,

Marie Zámečníková

Appendix 6: Reminder e-mail

Subject: REMINDER: Workers' Group Survey

EN, FR, CZ

==========

EN

Dear Workers' Group members,

It is an honour to send you an invitation to participate in **the Workers' Group research** called "**Digitalisation, Employment and Covid-19**", where we analyse how has the digitalisation shaped employment during the pandemic from the perspective of the European Trade Union's representatives.

By filling out this **5 - 10 minutes survey,** you can contribute by your perspective to **the up-to-date research** about the pandemic and its **influence on employees**. There is **no requirement to have expertise in the area of digitalisation** in order to take part in this research.

Please follow this link to participate: https://www.survio.com/survey/d/G4N4H0U1G6I6X1A3F

Best wishes,

Marie Zamecnikova

==========

FR

Chers membres du groupe des travailleurs,

J'ai l'honneur de vous envoyer une invitation à participer à la recherche **du groupe des travailleurs** intitulée "**Digitalisation, Travail et Covid-19**", dans laquelle nous analysons comment la digitalisation a **influencé l'emploi** pendant la pandémie du point de vue des représentants des syndicats en Europe.

Par le fait de remplir ce sondage d'une durée de **5 à 10 minutes**, vous allez contribuer, par votre perspective, à la recherche sur un sujet d'actualité pour les travailleurs. **Il n'est pas nécessaire d'avoir une expérience dans le domaine de la digitalisation pour participer à cette recherche**.

Pour participer, cliquez sur ce lien: https://www.survio.com/survey/d/X3L4K1V9P9Y8N1B6H

Cordialement,

Marie Zamecnikova

==========

CZ

Vážený pane, Vážená paní,

ráda bych Vás pozvala k účasti ve výzkumu **zaměstnanecké skupiny EHSV** pod názvem "**Digitalizace, Zaměstnanost a Covid-19"**.

Cílem tohoto projektu je zjistit, jak digitalizace **ovlivňuje zaměstnanost** během pandemie z pohledu zástupců Evropského odborového svazu. **K účasti na tomto výzkumu není třeba mít odborné znalosti v oblasti digitalizace.** Vyplnění dotazníku Vám zabere pouze několik minut.

Klikněte na tento odkaz a můžete začít: https://www.survio.com/survey/d/G9D2O7P3R6T4L9J2F

Pomozte nám analyzovat vliv digitalizace v období pandemie na zaměstnance.

Předem děkuji za Vaši pomoc a jsem s pozdravem,

Marie Zámečníková

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EN