

Digitalisation in SASK programme 2026-2029

Background paper for programme partners

Digitalisation is one of the megatrends disrupting the world of work across all sectors as work is becoming more and more digitized. Digitalisation is promoted to have a huge potential for innovation and efficiency in workplaces. It can contribute to economic success, good working conditions and quality jobs.

However, there are increasing signs of digitalisation causing job loss, deskilling, worsening working conditions, precarious jobs, and threats to democracy, inclusion and equality. Digitalisation is driven by capitalist interests to increase efficiency, often at the expense of workers. Through new continuously developing digital tools, there are new unprecedented opportunities for employers to monitor and use algorithmic management towards employees. Digitalisation in its many forms is challenging strongly the fundamental principles and rights at work.

In the next programme cycle 2026-2029 SASK aims to strengthen workers' rights in the face of digitalisation in the world of work. Initiatives of partners may vary but the emphasis is encouraged to be on assessing what changes digitalisation is bringing to labour rights and in actions to respond to these changes, reactively and proactively.

To address these challenges, the following are examples of specific topics that can be addressed under the theme:

Digital rights of workers

The amount of data collected from the workers has increased in recent years. It has already been shown that ubiquitous surveillance causes stress and anxiety and decreases trust in the workplace. There are examples of how surveillance and algorithmic management lead to discrimination and compromises in safety and health of workers. Surveillance has in some cases also hindered the right to organise. What data is gathered, how it is gathered, what the data is used for, and how the data is stored are questions that workers have a right to ask.

SASK welcomes initiatives focusing on limiting and regulating digital surveillance, co-governance of algorithms, fight against digital discrimination and workers' collective data rights. The initiatives could include e.g. training and advocacy work on digital rights and supporting collective bargaining on these rights.

ILO FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES ESPECIALLY RELEVANT:

- ✓ freedom of association
- ✓ elimination of discrimination
- ✓ safe and healthy working environment

Leaving no-one behind in digitalisation

Digitalisation is disrupting the world of work, leading to job loss, deskilling and worsening working conditions.

SASK welcomes initiatives focusing on mechanisms to protect workers' rights when digitalisation is disrupting jobs especially in the form of automation and AI. Such protective mechanisms could include e.g. life-long learning, social security and engaging workers when digital tools are introduced at the workplace - in other words, defending the workers' rights to collective bargaining in digitalisation processes. Also, studies to forecast the upcoming changes are welcome.

ILO FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES ESPECIALLY RELEVANT:

- ✓ right to collective bargaining
- ✓ safe and healthy working environment

Fighting the precariousness of labour markets

Digital technology has facilitated a split in the labour market to either better quality jobs or precarious jobs. For example, in platform work technology has enabled firms to rely on an increasingly flexible labour pool and to classify workers as entrepreneurs. This has led to discrimination, compromising workers' safety and in some cases forcing people to work. Also, the right to organise and negotiate has been jeopardized due to increasing platform work and telework.

SASK welcomes initiatives focusing on making digitalised work decent. Initiatives could include e.g. organising platform workers as well as initiatives to confront platformisation, informalisation and precarisation due to digitalisation.

ILO FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES ESPECIALLY RELEVANT:

- ✓ freedom of association
- ✓ right to collective bargaining
- ✓ elimination of forced labour
- ✓ elimination of discrimination
- ✓ safe and healthy working environment

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