



European Social Dialogue

WORK PROGRAMME 2022 - 2024

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INTRODUCTION

The seventh work programme 2022-2024 of the European social partners aims to strengthen autonomous social dialogue at European and national levels. It comes at an important time, ahead of an EU initiative on social dialogue.

Social dialogue at all levels is particularly relevant for fair, responsible and effective labour markets. Social partners are particularly well-placed to contribute to shape the process of the digital and green transitions and accompany the resilience and recovery from Covid-19. They play a key role to co-design with the European Commission and national governments balanced measures and solutions to create an enabling environment for enterprises and improved living and working conditions.

This work programme has also been developed as the invasion of Ukraine impacts in many ways, including on the functioning of our economies and labour markets.

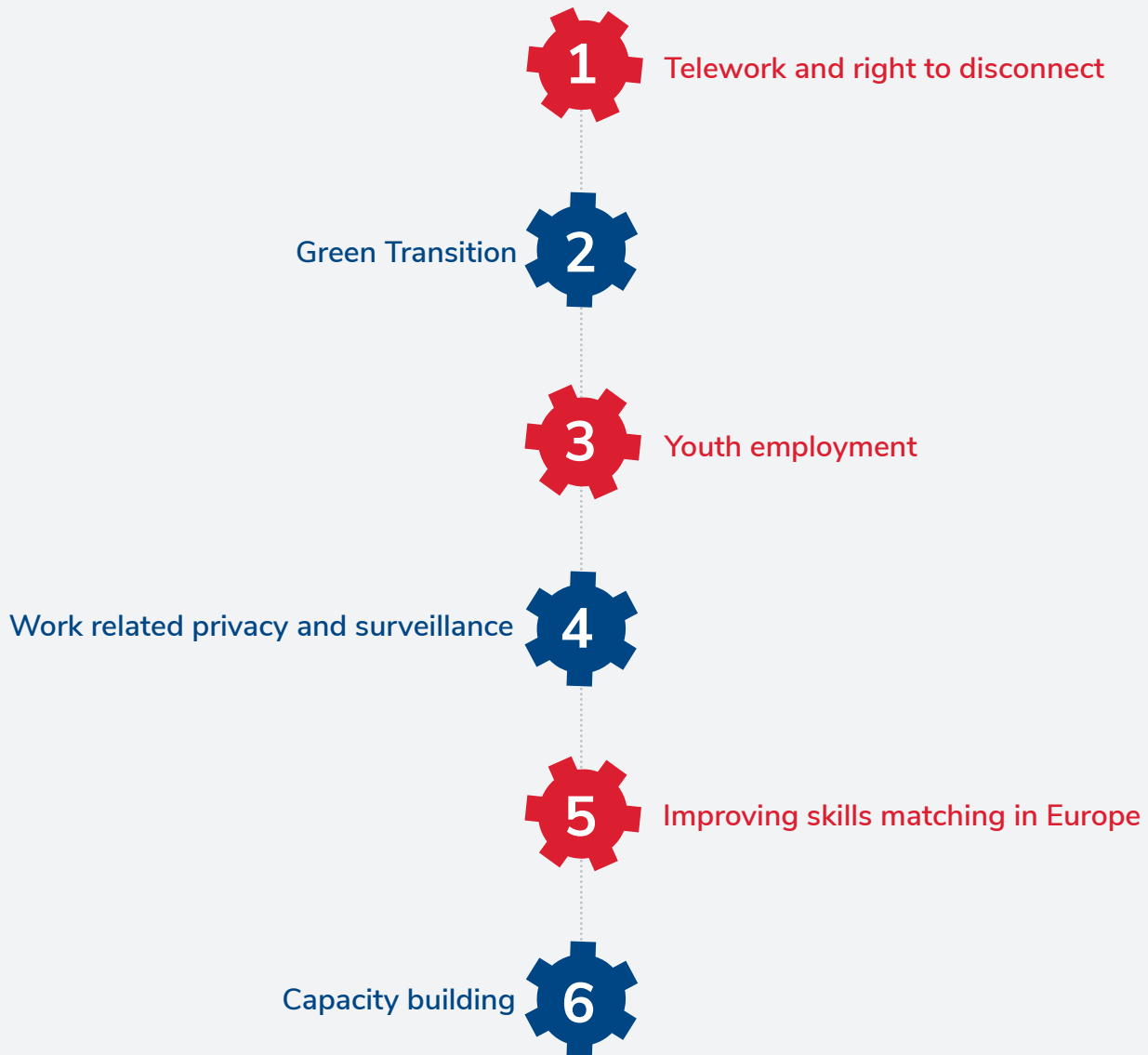
To strengthen the role of the autonomous European social dialogue, the EU institutions should further support a stronger role of social partners in the future. This is justified by the recent experience whereby the EU and Member States relied a lot on the EU and national social partners to design the labour market and social response to the Covid-19 crisis. The Commission should in particular clarify how its priority to support social dialogue fits into the overall context of Europe's social dimension, and in particular provide clear and transparent rules on how the Commission will act concerning European social partners' agreements.

Going forward it is important that the Commission and the national governments fully respect EU and national social partners' autonomy. The European social partners, on their side, will continue and expand their efforts to improve the implementation and impact of their autonomous framework agreements and continue their joint commitments such as the European partnership for integration – offering opportunities for refugees to integrate into the European Labour Market. They will also continue to achieve better support including capacity building from the European Commission and national governments to national social partners in the countries where this is needed.

In the context of the upcoming EU social dialogue initiative, the European social partners invite the Commission to assess the functioning, and consider improvements, as regards the existing EU tripartite advisory committees. This may include creating new ones, where appropriate and necessary and with the full consultation, involvement, and agreement of the European and national social partners.

As regards their own bipartite activities, the European social partners will continue in 2022-2024 their joint activities aiming to improve the performance of labour markets and social systems by organising two meetings on different topics every year.

The full list of work programme priorities is as follows:



The European social partners may decide to tackle other issues than those contained in this work programme and consider other means of actions following European Commission consultations in accordance with articles 154-155 of the Treaty on the European Union.

Telework and right to disconnect



In 2002, the European Social Partners reached their forward-looking agreement on telework, defining telework, which was then a new form of organising and/or performing work in the context of an employment relationship. This agreement addressed issues such as, provision of equipment and health and safety, as well as establishing that teleworkers have the same employment conditions as workers who work in the employers' premises.

One of the key challenges going forward is for the social partners to take stock of the digitalisation developments and the learnings from the sanitary crisis on telework, in light of their existing agreement of 2002 which laid the foundation for social dialogue and collective bargaining on voluntary telework solutions. This includes the issues such as hybrid work, the right to disconnect, organisation of work in particular the management of online workers and the link with working-time, health and safety, work life balance, surveillance, privacy, and data protection.



INSTRUMENT:

Review and update of the 2002 Autonomous Agreement on Telework to be put forward for adoption in the form of a legally binding agreement implemented via a Directive¹

Green Transition



Green transition, decarbonisation and circular economy along with digitalisation contributes to changing jobs, tasks, and to creating new occupations while others disappear. These transitions are interlinked and mutually reinforcing. Digitalisation can contribute to more environmentally friendly production processes, service provision and lifestyles, while greening of the economy requires more advanced technologies and digital solutions to accompany structural changes. The speed and scale of this transformation in the labour market requires the early and effective involvement of the social partners in order to raise awareness and to identify solutions that can be tailored to sectors specificities and implemented at the local level. Social partners should play an active role to ensure that a just transition, underpinned by appropriate public funding and investments, creates quality jobs and supports enterprises and workers adapting to change, including new skills needs, upskilling, redesign of jobs, organising job-to-job transitions and work organisation improvements.



INSTRUMENT:

Framework of Actions

¹The parties to this work programme will adopt their negotiating mandate according to their internal procedures.

Youth employment



Young people suffered a negative impact from the successive economic and social crises of the last decade and have been further affected by the Covid-19 crisis. The European Year of Youth in 2022 is an opportunity for the social partners to keep focusing on youth employment as a priority. Social Partners are committed to improve employment opportunities, working conditions, including pay and/or compensation and skills matching so that young people enter the labour markets with relevant skills but also with diverse forms of employment with sufficient employment protection. Social Partners demand that institutions create an enabling environment for enterprises to hire and retain young workers, and for them to achieve their potential, including through promoting quality and effective apprenticeships. These efforts need to be further strengthened.

As a follow-up of the existing Framework of Actions on Youth Employment, a joint seminar will be organised to explore best practices, challenges, and tools available to facilitate the employment and transitions of young workers. A joint statement should be negotiated as an outcome of this seminar.



INSTRUMENT:

Joint Seminar in view of a joint statement

Work related privacy and surveillance



The extensive increase in the use of digital tools at the workplace, where well managed, offers opportunities for improved productivity and working conditions but also raises concerns regarding privacy, surveillance and monitoring of workers and their performance including the need to respect the applicable rules on collection of personal data. Monitoring and surveillance tools should only be used where necessary and proportionate and the workers' right to privacy should be ensured. In their autonomous framework agreement on digitalisation, the European social partners noted that "digital technology and AI surveillance systems, along with data processing... raise the risk of compromising the dignity of the human being, particularly in cases of personal monitoring. This could lead to deterioration of working conditions and well-being of workers." Due to the accelerated rate of adoption of workplace technologies which have monitoring and surveillance capabilities, social partners need to create the space for exchanging views on these trends and the relevance this has for social partners and collective bargaining at all appropriate levels across Europe. Social Partners' negotiations governing such processes are also a crucial element to be taken into account.



INSTRUMENT:

Joint seminar in view of joint guidelines

Improving skills matching in Europe



As part of the green and digital transitions, upskilling and reskilling are a key factor for ensuring workers' access to quality jobs and employers' access to a skilled workforce. Therefore, it is important to strengthen and enhance social dialogue at all appropriate levels to ensure effective access to training (e.g. paid educational leave, training funds). Europe needs to improve its performance in addressing unresolved skills mismatches and reduce skills shortages. The involvement of social partners in skills intelligence (e.g. on skills forecasting, update of occupational profiles, etc) also needs to be developed. Social Partners will undertake a joint project activity, including looking at the different existing practices in the Member States and across sectors.



INSTRUMENT:

Seminar followed by joint research project

Capacity building



Social dialogue and collective bargaining have proven essential in mitigating the social and economic impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Social Dialogue Committee will conduct an assessment of the existing capacity building projects and instruments and continue its work aiming to improve the implementation of autonomous framework agreements and capacity building under a renewed mandate. This will take into account the need for dedicated funding for implementing our European autonomous agreements at national level and the need to secure social dialogue in the recovery from Covid-19.

Moreover, we will pursue joint action where appropriate to support the capacity building of social partners in candidate countries with a view to raising their awareness on the role of the European social dialogue, taking into account the progress made in the context of accession talks. The European social partners will also continue their participation in EU external activities relating to social dialogue as part of bilateral cooperation between the EU and third countries.



INSTRUMENT:

Subgroup of the Social Dialogue Committee, Joint Project to support a review of the effectiveness of the capacity building projects and identification of obstacles to the implementation of the existing autonomous framework agreements and a dedicated funding line for implementation, Integrated Projects dedicated to strengthening the link between social dialogue at European and national level (seminars, training, resource centre, translation fund)



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