



Digitalisation and job quality in the electricity sector

DIGIQU@LPUB main findings

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Patterns and incidence of digitalisation in the sector

- In the electricity sector, **digitalisation takes different forms** such as workflow management on mobile devices, Linky meters to measure electricity consumption at customers' premises, email and instant messaging applications, online discussion tools, drones and smart glasses for maintenance activities, specific applications for smartphones, and teleworking.
- The use of **mobile devices and ICT is widespread**:
 - As shown by the project survey (DGQS), 95.8% of respondents from the electricity sector, confirmed regular use of tablets, laptops and smartphones in their daily tasks and 98.5% of respondents reported regular use of ICT.
 - Only 23% of respondents reported the use of machines operated by digital commands to perform certain operations (for example, lifting heavy loads or persons, monitoring equipment or persons),

The impact of digitalisation on work organisation

- DGQS shows that the impact of digitalisation on various areas of work organisation is mostly positively assessed by the workers.
- Positive aspects generally acknowledged by the interviewees and FGs
 - e.g. digital tools optimizing control and maintenance; digital planning and organisation systems.
- Negative aspects of digitalisation include:
 - Increased intensity and pace of work
 - Less work autonomy
 - ‘Paradox of autonomy’, as new routine tasks related to the digitalised work have replaced analogue/paper administrative tasks
 - Risks associated with the pervasive real-time monitoring of work and workers brought about by digitalisation.

The impact of digitalisation on working time

- DGQS survey shows that workers mainly state that digitalisation has not changed features of their contractual working time.
- The interviews make little direct reference to the issue of exceeding contractual working hours per se, even though they recall that working time has mainly been extended because of both increased work intensity and work overload.
- These may to some extent be a result of digitalisation but are mainly attributed to other structural factors of the public services, such as a persistent lack of human and financial resources, seasonal effects, external events and constraints.

The impact of digitalisation on work-life balance

- The respondents to the survey are evenly distributed between the different assessments: no change (1/3 of respondents); positive effects on WLB (1/3); negative effects on WLB (1/3 of respondents).
- National reports are relatively silent on the issue of reconciling work and private life, although certain aspects are discussed in relation to other aspects of job quality, such as the organisation of work.
- The interviews in some of the reports draw attention to the intrusive and disruptive effects on the WLB of the increasing use of digital tools and devices that imply a perceived and/or real need to be constantly connected.

The impact of digitalisation on physical and mental health

- 48% of respondents stated that they had not noticed any physical health problems due to the digitalisation of their work, and this rate rose to 59.4% for mental health problems. However:
 - 39.6% of respondents point to a **physical problem** related to digitalisation, either a new problem or aggravation of a pre-existing issue;
 - 1/3 of the respondents report that digitalisation of work has generated **mental health problems**;
 - Almost half of the respondents report an increased exposure to **psychosocial risks** due to digitalisation.
- Interviews and FGs mainly discuss the negative effects of digitalisation on the health of workers:
 - link between mental health problems and the increase in stress among workers generated by the intensification of the pace of work inherent to the use of digital tools;
 - increased individualisation of digitalised work and the resulting greater social isolation of workers among the factors generating stress and mental problems.

The impact of digitalisation on skills and learning

- Training **largely provided but inadequate**:
 - most respondents agree on the usefulness of skills training, either training limited to specific skills related to the digital tool used or wider learning on both general and specific digital skills.
 - 2/3 of public workers stated that they had received training from their employer to acquire or develop new digital skills.
 - But only 23.6% of the respondents state that the training fully matched their needs. For the majority of respondents, the matching was partial and regular updates are necessary.
- The use of digitalisation for training and learning (e-training, virtual reality programmes) is a positive contribution BUT **some negative aspects** include:
 - the individualisation of the responsibility for planning the learning process but also of the training process in itself;
 - the lack of certification of many digital training modules;
 - The risk of overtime and unpaid working hours;
 - The lack of internal training resources and the need to outsource training at great expense;
 - The potential deepening of inequalities between workers.

The impact of digitalisation on job security and career prospects

- Workers' perceptions of impacts on their job security and their future prospects for career progression are mainly polarised between:
 - those who do not think that digitalisation has influenced their job security (31.7 to 53.5% of opinions on the proposed items) and
 - those who believe that digitalisation has a positive effect on their job security and future prospects (40.2 to 44.5% of responses).
 - In contrast, around one in five workers has a more pessimistic view of their future in a digitalised world of work.

The impact of digitalisation on worker's right

- Across the three sectors considered in the project, **around half of the workers stated that they did not know** whether a formal information/consultation procedure had been organised in their workplace.
- Almost one in four workers stated more affirmatively that no information and consultation procedure on the implementation of digitalisation had been organised in their workplace.
- Fewer than 10% of workers state that they have benefited from a formal information/consultation procedure, whether at individual level, through the unions or through a combination of the two methods.
- As for the right to disconnect:
 - just **36.5% in public electricity utilities** feel pressure to be permanently or frequently connected.
 - The vast majority of respondents from the three public services emphasise the importance of this right to disconnect as a workers' right, and the need to include it in labour law and social dialogue at all levels, from cross-industry to the workplace level.