

ETNO and UNI Europa ICTS consolidate the findings of the 2-year social dialogue project on Digital Upskilling for All

Brussels, 19 July 2022 - The European social partners for the telecommunications sector – UNI Europa ICTS, the European trade union federation for service workers, and ETNO, the European Telecommunication Network Operators' Association, have concluded the two-year social dialogue project called "Digital Upskilling for All!" (DUFA!).

The findings will enable the workforce of the European telecommunications to better tackle digital upskilling. Moreover, the best practices identified are paving the way for a more diverse and inclusive workforce of our sector. The project looks at the broader ecosystem of Europe's workforce and aims at inspiring other sectors to address these critical issues. An executive summary compiling the highlights of the project is now [available](#) in 19 European official languages.

Half of Europeans have digital skills

[Research](#) shows that by 2025, half of the workforce will require reskilling. At the current pace in Europe, all sectors will face a significant challenge in reskilling their workforce. The latest "Digital Economy and Society Index" [report](#) shows where Europe currently stands: only 56% of Europeans have at least basic digital skills.

These findings are on par with the results of an industry survey carried by Mercer: according to the results, 54% of the experts involved in the DUFA! project are currently in the "analyse and plan" stage when it comes to upskilling their workforce. This is still far from achieving Europe's Digital Decade targets for 2030, but a swift mobilisation of all EU stakeholders increases the chances in getting there: according to the targets, 80% of Europeans must have at least basic digital skills by 2030.

Two years' work to identify best practices

Since February 2020, the experts involved in the project have mobilised to better understand what keeps the telco sector short in tackling digital upskilling from different perspectives: gender equality, aging workforce, as well as minorities.

Looking at the project findings from a gender viewpoint, key drivers that hinder a targeted digital upskilling strategy include biases in HR processes, lack of mentorship programs, or gender disparities on inclusion for the creative and innovative ICT roles. When it comes to digital upskilling strategy of the ageing workforce, major constraints identified include the lack of internal flexible work policies, missing a strategy for phased retirement, or the creation of new suitable job positions and workplace ergonomics. Moreover, participants agreed that there is an untapped talent in underrepresented minorities such as neurodiverse or disabled people, different ethnicities, refugees or the LGBTQIA+ community.

Inspiring the telco sector and beyond

DUFA! is another successful example bringing together ETNO and UNI Europa to strengthen the resilience of the telecommunications workforce. Financed by the European Commission, the project has become a stepping stone for our memberships and will challenge the approach towards digitally upskilling as means to retain and attract new talent.

By having looked beyond the telco sector, the project has identified best practices that can be used as an ally in speeding up the digital upskilling targets set by the European Commission.