EUROPEAN SOCIAL DIALOGUE COMMITTEE FOR THE POSTAL SECTOR

WORKING GROUP ON TRAINING, HEALTH & SAFETY

Draft Joint Declaration on *Skills and Work Environment in the Digital Postal Transition: New Analysis from the Social Partners*

Context

The transformation of the postal sector has continued unabated over recent years. The diversification of products and services, driven by evolving market dynamics resulting from the progressive liberalisation of postal market and the rapid and far-reaching expansion of e-commerce, has remained a defining feature of the industry.

Alongside, and beyond the continuing growth of e-commerce, the sector has been profoundly affected by the digital revolution and, more recently, by the increasing deployment of artificial intelligence. All these developments have required postal operators and their stakeholders to continuously adapt their structures, policies, and strategies in order to respond effectively to new circumstances and emerging challenges.

These developments have been further compounded by financial and economic pressures, and an evolving geopolitical environment. In response, new organisational and management models have been introduced and progressively refined, to respond effectively to constant change.

Within this context, technological innovation, digitalisation, and artificial intelligence have further accelerated and intensified their impact on the organisation of work, working conditions, and employability. Social dialogue has assumed an increasingly strategic role in facilitating discussion, fostering consensus, and enabling the timely implementation of the adaptive measures required in response to these developments.

In this regard, the activities of the Training, Health and Safety Working Group of the Social Dialog Committee for the Postal Sector have consistently been guided by the European policy framework and by the initiatives promoted by the European Commission in the fields of European Social Dialogue and skills development. Particular reference should be made to the 2025 Pact for European Social Dialogue, which establishes an enhanced framework strengthening the role of social partners in shaping labour market, employment, and social policies as well as to the broader cooperation between the European institutions and the Social Partners and the ongoing development of the European Pillar of Social Rights.

With respect to training and lifelong learning, the Strategic Framework for the European Education Area and the efforts of a Union of Skills, aimed at promoting upskilling and reskilling across the workforce, represent important reference points for the activities of the Working Group and provide a valuable foundation for addressing the challenges and opportunities arising from the sector's ongoing transformation.

In light ofhe various transformations experienced by the sector and the challenges it has been required to address, the social partners of the sector have consistently recognised training, retraining, and upskilling as matters of paramount importance. These have been regarded as essential instruments for responding to the evolving skills requirements of the workforce and for making a substantial contribution to preserving and enhancing employability across the postal sector.

Joint Initiatives

Recognizing that digitization and, more recently Artifical Intelligence play an even more crucial role in the postal sector, the Social Partners represented in the European Social Dialogue Committee for the Postal Sector (SDC hereinafter) comprised by the Social Affairs Committee under the umbrella of Posteurop and the Trade Unions Organizations represented by UNI Europa Post & Logistics and of CESI (European Confederation of Independent Trade Unions) have jointly implemented a series of projects aimed at systematically monitoring developments in the sector, specifically addressing issues of training, retraining and upskilling tools in anticipation of future sector scenarios as developed by the social partners.

To this end, the SDC "Training, Health & Safety" working group has achieved the following joint milestones over the years:

- 2006:Joint Declaration on Training and Skills, identifying six orientations for actions;
- 2014: Joint Declaration for the project "Matching Skills & Jobs in the European Postal Sector, highlighting the importance of effectively matching existinga and emerging jobs with the required skills, particularly following the the development of e-commerce;
- 2016-2018: Implementation of the project "Promoting Social Dialogue in an enlarged Europe" which examinedd the level of awareness and understanding of the European Social Dialogue amongst SDC members as well as the initial impact of digitialisation on training;
- 2019: Joint Declaration on Training in the Digital Era which, following the conclusions of the Promoting Social Dialogue project, focused on the impact of new technologies, particularly digital technologies, on training and retraining programs, and skills needs, as well as on the benefits and potential risks associated with digitization on the work environment;
- 2022: Joint Declaration on Training and Work Environment in in the Digital Transition, based on the related key project examining the impact of digitization on skills and work environment across three stragic professional areas: Back-Office operations, Delivery Operations and Post-offices network. The project provided a five-year forward looking analysis, offering the social partners valuable insights into potential consequences for the working environment and into how social dialogue can help manage the impacts in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic and during digital and environmental transitions;

Building on the outcomes of the previous project Postal Skills and Work Environment in the Digital Era (2020-2023), the social partners carried out the follow-up project *"Skills and Work Environment in the Digital Postal Transition: New Analysis from the Social Partners".*

The main purpose of the project was to develop a clear and forward-looking understanding of how the working environment, occupational profiles and skills in the postal sector are expected to evolve over the next decade. On this basis, the project sought to support the design of effective training strategies that anticipate future workforce needs, while also assessing emerging

Occupational Health & Safety risks associated with increasingly digital and hybrid working environments.

The latest project broadened the analysis by extending the forecast horizon from five to ten years and by expanding the scope to four key postal sector occupational families within the postal sector:

- Post Office Network
- Sorting Centers
- Delivery of Postal Items
- Call Centers and Customer Care

The SDC social partners acknowledge that the joint project *"Skills and Work Environment in the Digital Postal Transition: New Analysis from the Social Partners"* represents a milestone in the history of joint initiatives, notably for its innovative methodological approach, its use of artificial intelligence in the analysis of the findings, and the quality of the materials developed and made available to employers and trade unions. The project adopted a hybrid methodology combining qualitative and quantitative approaches. This included desk research, predictive modelling using machine learning to forecast future skills and training needs, and interactive seminars designed to validate and further enrich the analytical findings.

During the seminars, a GenAI-powered chatbot, trained on a curated postal-sector knowledge base, facilitated real-time interaction and data collection. The insights gathered through this process were subsequently used to validate and further refine the predictive model.

In terms of deliverables, the project produced two principal outputs. The Final Report provides a comprehensive overview of the findings across the four professional families, together with an aggregated analysis. The Training Pathways, comprising 35 training briefs addressing the identified skills and training needs, are designed as a strategic instrument to support social partners in equipping the workforce for the future by anticipating and responding to evolving skills requirements.

Shared Findings

The European Social Partners jointly recognize that, over the next decade, the postal sector will continue to play a fundamental role for society and the economy. It will retain its pivotal role while remaining at the heart of the far-reaching technological transformation currently reshaping businesses, services and labour markets.

The European Social Partners in the postal sector acknowledge that digitalization will continue to shape the sector throughout its transformation, bringing both challenges that need to be addressed and opportunities that should be identified and seized. Adapting to these developments cannot follow a one-size-fits-all approach across Europe. Rather it should reflect the specific needs, circumstances and realities of individual country and postal organization.

The European Social Partners in the postal sector further recognize that artificial intelligence is already having and will continue to have a significant impact on the sector in the years ahead. In responding to these, the Social Partners underline the importance of managing technological change in a manner that supports workplace needs and contributes to the improvement of working environments and working conditions, including occupational health and safety. This transformation

should be accompanied by appropriate organisational and management measures that take full account of the human and professional dimensions of work and support workers throughout the process of change.

Considering the developments outlined above, the Sectoral Social Dialogue Committee (SDC) for the postal sector, building on its previous joint positions, reaffirms the strategic importance of training, reskilling and upskilling at a time when businesses and labour markets increasingly require evolving skills and competences. In this context, the Social Partners affirm that the process of skills development and adaptation should be embedded in a lifelong learning perspective, with the aim of ensuring the best possible match between skills, jobs and maintaining a high level of employability throughout working life. At the same time, Social Partners acknowledge that training, re-training and up-skilling are a shared responsibility of all parties, in their respective roles, to ensure that training remains strategic, forward-looking and aligned, with the needs of the sector.

Considering the findings of the study and the continued evolution of the sector, the European Social Partners underline the strategic importance of AI, green, digital, soft and technical skills. While also recognizing the relevance of strengthening basic skills, they consider these competences as essential to effectively manage change within the postal sector and address the challenges associated with the ongoing digital, technological and environmental transitions.
Against the backdrop of the continuing diversification of products and services in the European postal sector and its growing societal relevance, the European Social Partners reaffirm the sector's vital role in strengthening social cohesion across Europe. They further recognize the potential of new technologies, digitalization and artificial intelligence to support the development and delivery of increasingly innovative, accessible and citizen-centered solutions that are better equipped to respond to the evolving needs and expectations of society.

Finally, the European Social Partners in the postal sector reaffirm the importance of Social Dialogue in managing change and addressing the challenges arising from new technologies, digitalization and use of artificial intelligence. Social Partners acknowledge the crucial role of social dialogue in designing and implementing appropriate training pathways that respond to the evolving needs of the postal market and of citizens. This includes identifying and promoting solutions to prevent and mitigate potential occupational health and safety risks associated with these transformations.

Accordingly, national-level social partners in the postal sector are encouraged to engage in continuous and constructive social dialogue aimed at anticipating, preventing and addressing potential stress and psychosocial risk factors linked to the adaptation to new tasks, job profiles and professional responsibilities. Such dialogue should support both workers and postal operators throughout the transition while contributing to quality employment, sustainable working conditions, and long-term resilience of the sector.

Next Steps

In line with the conclusions of the "Skills and Work Environment in the Digital Postal Transition: New Analysis from the Social Partners" study and building on previous initiatives on training, skills development and skills and jobs matching implemented over the years, the European Social Partners of the Postal Sector jointly undertake to:

- Analyze the impacts of Artificial Intelligence and digitalization processes in the postal sector, with a particular focus on Occupational Health and Safety. This will include examining social dialogue practices, training initiatives and emerging skills needs on these topics, with the aim of improving working conditions and efficiency while minimizing any adverse effect on employee well-being;

- Continue to analyze the long-term evolution of the postal sector by extending the predictive time horizon and carrying out in depth analysis of changes in business models and the evolving social role of the sector;

- Continue to promote and spread the conclusions of the study “Skills and Work Environment in the Digital Postal Transition: New Analysis from the Social Partners” and the “Training Pathways Catalogue” among the members of the SDC Postal Sector also through the SDC postal sector website and other appropriate communication channels;

- Disseminate the conclusions of the joint initiative and the “Training Pathways Catalogue” at national level, thereby stimulating and encouraging dialogue between the social partners;

- Continue the exchange of information with the relevant European Commission Directorates-General and key stakeholders to follow and contribute to the ongoing debate on the transformation of the postal sector;

- Guide the activities of the working group towards areas that could benefit from the European Commissions’ financial support and contribute to the European actions and policies in the fields of training, skills and occupational health & safety.

Brussels, 24 November 2026

Jürgen Joos
President
European Social Dialogue Committee
for the Postal Sector

Stéphane Chevet
Vice President
European Social Dialogue Committee
for the Postal Sector