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***EPSU-CEMR Joint Declaration on the opportunities and  
challenges  
of digitalisation in local and regional administration***

**Working Document  
11 December 2015**

❖ Context:

The Public Sector must be prepared for the digital age, as there are major opportunities for growth, competitiveness and efficiency to be seized. However, the digital economy might grow without creating new jobs, even job losses might be the result of digitalisation, in particular in the public sector. To this end, public investment in job creation, adjustment measures and proper and inclusive implementation are necessary.

Moreover, the spectacular wealth gains that digitalisation is expected to generate, must be re-distributed fairly among all society. Therefore, maintaining high levels of employment is crucial to finance social security nets and strong public services, as key pillars of the European social model.

The reasons behind the digitalisation of the delivery of public services in local government are various: necessity to simplify and improve work processes and the quality of services, influence of the European Union and its modernisation agenda, adaptation to globalisation and to the interconnections of economies, impact of austerity policies on local and regional governments, local finances' fragility, development of e-services to inform the public in innovative and more efficient ways, etc.

In that perspective, the integration of digital services, and the incurred adaptation of work organisation and working conditions, must be supported with the objective to deliver quality public services. Improving the quality and sustainability of the jobs in public administrations constitutes a challenge that calls for a comprehensive social dialogue between local and regional governments and their employees.

Social dialogue is the most appropriate leverage to address the qualitative and quantitative aspects of digitalisation. It must also support adequate trainings, life-long learning, reskilling and adjustment programmes, for the mutual benefit of employers and employees in local and regional public administrations.

❖ Communication "A Digital Single Market Strategy"

In its Communication "[A Digital Single Market Strategy for Europe](#)" the European Commission addresses the issue of digitalisation of public administration, whereas it fails to adequately address:

- the employment dimension and to analyse the social impact of digitalisation (workers participation and adaptation, social rights and protection, collective bargaining, etc.);
- and the investment needs for the public sector and the costs and benefits of introducing e-government services. Even if they are usually mainstreamed, as horizontal issue, these

elements require being taken duly into account in the implementation process of the Strategy.

The scope of the initiative related to the public sector in the Communication is regrettably fuzzy, yet underlining the aim to modernise public services and administration and introduce a more cost-effective way to deliver public services, through the deployment of efficient 'e-services', 'e-administration' and 'e-procurement'.

Digitalisation of public services, however, remains a challenge, notably to improve the quality of working conditions of public sector workers, as well as the work organisation for local and regional governments and respecting the essential values of the public sector.

Therefore, an impact assessment of the Commission's initiatives is necessary to evaluate the short and long-term benefits for employment, public sector workers and employers and citizens. In that regard, the Better Regulation rules will provide some positive tools to raise awareness and call on the Commission to include employment conditions, social considerations, health and safety requirements, efficiency of public services delivery and respective interests of both employers and employees of the public sector.

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➤ *CEMR and EPSU as social partners would like to discuss the introduction of digital services at the workplace with their affiliates and members and respond to the initiatives of the European Commission around the following themes:*

- . Digitalisation has to be an **open and transparent process**;
- . Prior to implementation, any digital-driven initiative must be **elaborated after consulting local and regional governments and their employees** and respect collective bargaining in order to make sure they are fit for purpose.
- . This consultation has to provide **exhaustive information and** be triggered **in due time to and explain the digital strategy** to all municipal employees and to service users, and to enable a necessary **transition period** for public services providers to help them to adapt and ensure ownership of digital services;
- . The impact of digitalisation on the control over the labour process has to be **monitored** which is the core objective of social dialogue and requires a **constant and comprehensive social dialogue at all levels**;
- . **Adequate training** has to be provided, not only in ICT but in the implications for skills and workers' rights;
- . Monitoring and evaluation of the implementation process should be put in place from the beginning of the process and should look at different groups within the workforce, to this end a **differentiated approach** is necessary and will allow to embrace all the situations (regardless of the size of municipalities, the technical, human and financial means, political agendas, etc.);
- . Digital technology at the workplace must serve to **empower and support workers**, by giving workers greater autonomy and supporting work flexibility;

- . Digitalisation is expected to **support the development of new forms of work that can be mutually beneficial for employers and employees of the public sector;**
- . High levels of employees' **data protection** need to be established, through a common set of security rules, acknowledging that contrary to private sector, administrations have no mercantile purposes when they collect process and handle personal data.

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This Joint Declaration draws CEMR and EPSU's joint objective to take action and build a social dialogue framework for the benefit of local government workers and employers, within their SSDC on LRG.

They are determined to develop following action points, as also issued as recommendations in the joint publication "Digitalisation of local authority services in Europe" (available [here](#)):

- **Explore the changes to the work process caused by digitalisation;**
- **Assess the actual benefits enabled by digitalisation for workers and services delivery;**
- **Consider the information and training needs for workers at different stages in the implementation process and for different groups within the workforce;**
- **Identify how workers feel about the loss of personal/ telephone contact with clients after the introduction of digital systems;**
- **Monitor the incidence of muscular-skeletal conditions in the workplace;**
- **Monitor the incidence of psycho-social conditions in the workplace;**
- **Implement monitoring of sickness absence after the introduction of digital systems;**
- **Identify examples of good practice in the implementation of digitalisation;**
- **Facilitate the sharing of good practice.**