

Committee: International Labor Organization (ILO)

Subject: Does technology help or hinder working conditions?

Author: France (Workers)

France has always been on the forefront of scientific and technological progress – think of the metric system; a classic French invention. The COVID-19 pandemic highlights the necessity for continued technological development, for more ground-breaking inventions, not only in healthcare, but also in the workplace and in our schools. However, as a prominent supporter of the European labor laws, France recognizes that there also disadvantages – structural unemployment and undisclosed monitoring being some of the most prevalent. France is of the opinion, that government regulations need to target these issues directly; otherwise, the cost may outweigh the benefits.

It is estimated that 81% of the world workforce has been impacted by the pandemic – so, it is integral for our individual countries' economies, as well as the world economy, to encourage the development and spreading of technology so that we may increase productivity and bring more benefits to our citizens. On the other hand, a portion of workers are placed at a disadvantage, as they do not have the means to operate online or within the safety guidelines through the use of modern technologies. France therefore supports government endeavors such as Germany's development of a corona-warning-app, which can serve to protect employees in heavily populated workplaces.

It is France's opinion that shifts in the labor market that arise through technological development can be overcome through a fixation on *creative destruction*: according to a 2011 McKinsey study, the development of the internet has, in the past 15 years, destroyed 500 000 jobs in France, while simultaneously creating 1,2 million new ones. This kind of job creation can be achieved through the re-education of workers, the expansion of infrastructure to prevent geographical unemployment, the usage of government incentives to encourage bank lending to entrepreneurs (especially older workers), and the use of strategic taxation to provide generous unemployment benefits and a fair redistribution of funds. France, as a signatory of the Paris Agreement, sees an opportunity to build up the environmental technology sector through newly available labor forces and the advancement of related sectors.

The increase of invasive monitoring technologies raises the topic of privacy and the extent to which e.g. employers may supervise their employees; France is of the opinion that it is of interest to employers to instate transparency in all processes regarding surveillance to prevent civil unrest. France encourages other countries to adopt legislation similar to the European Union's GDPR and is in favor of regulations in the case of extreme monitoring. Regulations in lesser cases of surveillance should be implemented on a case-by-case basis with input from the trade unions as to negotiate collective bargaining agreements in which both the employees and employers are satisfied with the outcome – if in conflict, the provisions more favorable towards the employees should apply.

It is France's strong opinion that the international labor laws should be respected.

In sum, France favors increased technological development, under the condition that an appropriate amount of support is given to the workforce. The coronavirus pandemic has had a tremendous effect not only on our economies, but also on our people – let us not forget them when we build our brave new world.