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In recent years, artificial intelligence (AI) and digital technologies have begun reshaping almost every aspect of our economy, from how businesses operate to the skills workers need to thrive. As these advancements accelerate, it's clear that the demands on our workforce are evolving faster than ever before. Germany now finds itself at a pivotal moment, where we must face the profound changes sweeping across the labour market. Our challenge is not only to keep pace but to lead the way, ensuring that our citizens are equipped to handle the challenges and seize the opportunities of this digital revolution.

The shift toward remote and flexible work, a trend that gained significant momentum during the COVID-19 pandemic, has fundamentally changed the way we view traditional workspaces. For decades, "going to the office" was the standard for most professions, a routine that defined our professional and personal lives. Today, that idea is being reimagined. While physical offices will continue to exist, their role is likely to diminish in importance, giving way to a new era of hybrid work, where employees split their time between in-person collaboration and remote tasks.

This shift offers many advantages—greater flexibility, reduced commuting time, and the ability to balance work with personal responsibilities—but it also presents challenges. Hybrid work models must be carefully managed to ensure that productivity, creativity, and team cohesion do not suffer. At the same time, not all jobs can be done remotely, and we must be mindful of ensuring equity between different sectors and occupations. Our policies will support businesses and workers in navigating this transition, helping them adapt to more fluid and flexible working arrangements without compromising the benefits of traditional office environments.

At the heart of this transformation is education. The future of work will demand a new set of skills, and it is essential that our education system evolves to meet these needs. While the role of teachers and educational institutions will remain central, what they teach and how they teach must change. The skills that will define the jobs of tomorrow go far beyond traditional subjects. AI, data science, coding, and digital literacy are quickly becoming fundamental competencies for the modern workforce. Yet, technical skills alone are not enough. The future will also place a premium on creativity, problem-solving, critical thinking, and adaptability—traits that are inherently human and cannot easily be replicated by machines.

Lifelong learning will become a necessity rather than a choice. No longer can we rely on a single set of qualifications acquired early in life to carry us through an entire career. As technology evolves, so too must our knowledge and abilities. This means that workers will need access to ongoing education and training throughout their lives, and our policies must ensure that these opportunities are available to everyone, regardless of their current job or stage in life.

As we embrace these changes, we must not lose sight of the human element. While AI and automation offer the potential to boost efficiency and drive economic growth, we must be vigilant in ensuring that technology serves people, rather than the other way around. The goal should not be to replace human work with machines, but to enhance it. AI can take over routine and repetitive tasks, freeing up workers to focus on more creative, strategic, and fulfilling aspects of their jobs. But we recognize that the increased use of automation brings with it concerns about job displacement and a potential loss of meaning in work. We must take these concerns seriously.

Our approach will be centred on the well-being of workers. This means creating environments where technology empowers individuals, enabling them to reach their full potential rather than feeling marginalized or replaced. It's essential that we foster workplaces where employees feel valued, engaged, and purposeful, even as the nature of their tasks evolves. Germany will take a proactive

stance in promoting mental health and job satisfaction, ensuring that the digital transition is not just about economic efficiency but about human fulfilment.

To address the potential disruptions caused by AI and automation, we will invest heavily in retraining and upskilling programs. These initiatives will ensure that workers, regardless of age or industry, have the opportunity to transition smoothly into new roles as their current jobs evolve or disappear. Whether it's a factory worker learning to operate AI-powered machinery or a marketing professional adapting to new data-driven tools, our aim is to provide the resources and support needed for these transitions. No one should be left behind in the digital revolution.

In addition to education and retraining, we will also focus on modernizing our social safety nets. As the labour market changes, so too must the systems that support workers during periods of unemployment or transition. We must ensure that those who are displaced by technological disruption have access to financial security, job placement services, and mental health support. These measures will be crucial in fostering a sense of stability and confidence among workers as they navigate an uncertain future.

At its core, our policy approach is driven by a simple but powerful belief: technological progress should enhance the human experience, not diminish it. By approaching AI and digitalization with a human-centred mindset, we can create a future where economic growth goes hand in hand with improved quality of life. AI and automation, if harnessed responsibly, have the potential not only to drive productivity but to make work more meaningful and satisfying for everyone.

Germany is committed to leading the way in this new digital frontier. With the right investments in education, retraining, and social support, we believe we can create a labour market that is more dynamic, inclusive, and resilient than ever before. Our goal is clear: to ensure that all citizens have the skills and opportunities they need to thrive in the economy of the future, while preserving the values of fairness, equity, and human dignity that are central to our society.