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Safety and health at work in the digital age: EU-OSHA campaign

The digitalisation of the workplace brings with it new emerging risks. Discover the opportunities and challenges of digital transformation.

From virtual employee assistants to automation solutions, technology integration is changing **workplaces everywhere**.

Digitalisation offers greater opportunities for workers and employers across all sectors, but also presents greater **challenges and risks in terms of safety and health**.

If designed, implemented, managed and used in line with the anthropocentric approach, digital technologies will be safe and productive. However, as the use of digital technologies at work is increasing and their **impact on work** and workplaces is not yet fully understood, it is important to refine strategies that promote and protect the safety and health of workers.

And it is precisely on these issues that the " **Healthy and safe working environments 2023-2025**" campaign of the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EU-OSHA) - Safety and health at work in the digital age - focuses.

The objective of the campaign is to encourage a **safe and productive digital transformation of work**. One way to tackle this path lies in strategic planning based on five main objectives:

1. **Raise** awareness of the importance, relevance and implications for safety and health at work of the digital transformation of work.
2. **Increase the awareness** and practical knowledge of everyone in all sectors, workplaces and specific groups of workers regarding the safe and productive use of digital technologies.
3. **Improve knowledge** of new and emerging risks and opportunities related to the digital transformation of work.
4. **Promote risk assessment** and proactive health and safety management of the digital transformation of work by providing access to relevant resources (e.g. good practices, checklists, tools and guidance).
5. **Bring together stakeholders** to facilitate the exchange of information, knowledge and best practices, as well as foster collaboration for a safe and productive digital transformation of work.

The opportunities of digitalisation for companies and workers

The spread of digital technologies in the workplace opens new horizons for both workers and employers, also offering innovative ways to enhance safety and health at work.

Technological progress brings with it significant advantages:

- Through **automation**, repetitive, physically demanding or dangerous tasks are handed over to machines, reducing the risk to humans.
- **Robotics** and **artificial intelligence** (AI) are being used to assist or completely replace humans in risky work environments.
- **New technologies**, such as exoskeletons, are making it easier for traditionally disadvantaged categories, such as people with disabilities, to enter the job market.
- **Advanced monitoring**, enabled by the analysis of large volumes of data, allows you to intervene more quickly and more effectively on potential risks in the workplace.
- The ability to **work from home** offers workers greater flexibility and a better work-life balance, while increasing their autonomy.

Managing the emerging risks of the digital age

The digitalisation of the workplace represents an epochal turning point in the management of worker safety and health.

With the advent of technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI), big data, automation and connected devices, a dual scenario of **opportunities and risks** emerges, redefining operating methods, professional roles, and the very nature of work.

These transformations raise fundamental questions about safety and health at work in the digital age, highlighting the need for an evolved and conscious approach to **managing emerging risks**.

In the era of digital transformation, addressing the challenges posed by occupational safety and health (OSH) risk management is of fundamental importance.

This context requires the implementation of preventive and risk management strategies that consider the increase in complexity and variability of the working environment made possible by digital technologies.

Finding the right ba**lance between the advantages brought by technological innovations and the protection of the safety and well-being of workers** implies coordinated and joint action by all those involved in the world of work. Cooperation between diverse stakeholders ? including companies of all sizes, employees, legislative bodies and technology developers ? is crucial to building a **workplace that is both innovative, safe and healthy**.

This collaborative process should be based on an open and constructive dialogue, aimed not only at sharing knowledge and best practices but also at proactively identifying potential risks and solutions to mitigate them.

Only through common commitment and a shared vision can the sometimes turbulent waters of digitalisation be successfully navigated, ensuring that digital technologies serve humanity and not vice versa.

Regulations on digitalisation and safety in the workplace

The current regulatory context, represented in particular by the **European Framework Directive 89/391 EEC on the safety and health of workers**, together with other thematic directives, constitutes a robust and reliable basis for navigating the complexities introduced by growing digitalisation in the workplace.

Despite the existence of this robust regulatory framework, the relentless advancement of digital technologies raises new challenges and introduces previously unexplored risks, requiring constant attention and periodic updating of regulations.

The speed with which innovation and technological change occur requires a **dynamic and flexible approach to legislation**, capable of quickly adapting to new working realities.

In this context, a joint commitment between legislators, industries, trade unions and the scientific community becomes essential to ensure that workplace health and safety regulations are continuously reviewed and updated, taking into account the evolution of the technological landscape and its implications for the safety and health of workers.

The aim is to ensure that the protections offered to workers not only remain current but become increasingly effective in preventing risks and promoting safe working environments.

Adapting policies and regulations to today's and future digital realities is essential to anticipate and mitigate the risks associated with the use of new technologies, ensuring that workers are effectively protected regardless of rapid changes in the labor market.

This process of regulatory evolution will not only safeguard the well-being of workers but will also help create fertile ground for responsible and sustainable innovation in working practices, promoting technological progress that is fair and inclusive.