



## Safe and healthy work in the digital age – EU-OSHA Campaign 2023–2025

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### FINAL REPORT

With the support of the European Centre for Workers' Questions (EZA), the National Federation of Works Councils organized a two-day seminar in Budapest on June 11–12, 2026, titled “Safe and Healthy Work in the Digital Age—EU-OSHA’s 2023–2025 Campaign.” The event was attended by more than 30 participants, including domestic attendees and 13 participants from eight countries—Albania, Austria, the Czech Republic, Poland, Lithuania, Germany, Portugal, and Serbia - representing our trade union partners in their respective countries.

The primary goal of the seminar was to draw the attention of trade unions to the new occupational safety and health (OSH) challenges arising from the rapid spread of digital technologies, with particular regard to the safety, health and dignity of workers. Another objective was to expand the knowledge of union members and OSH representatives on the risks arising in digital work environments, with a particular focus on psychosocial risks—such as isolation, burnout and the expectation of constant availability—which often remain invisible yet significantly impact workers’ well-being. The seminar provided practical guidance on effectively identifying, managing and preventing these risks.

The speakers covered a wide range of issues related to workplace safety and health arising from digitalization: mental health in remote work and the digital work environment; the health and safety implications of working from home; the right to disconnect and the regulation of digital working hours; the impact of automation and artificial intelligence on workplace safety; the role of digital tools and wearable technologies in risk prevention; and strategies for union action and representation in the digitized labour market. The speakers were leading experts in fields relevant to the topic, such as occupational psychology, labour law and forensic occupational medicine.

In his opening remarks, **Imre Palkovics**, the outgoing president of the National Confederation of Workers' Councils, emphasized that the topic of the seminar is more relevant today than ever before. He stressed that technological transformation can only be truly successful if it continues to prioritize the safety, health and dignity of workers.

In his presentation titled “Digital Workplaces and Psychosocial Risks - New Challenges for the Mental Health of Workers”, **Dávid Zerkovitz**, occupational psychologist, outlined the risks associated with the spread of digital workplaces, with a particular focus on potential solutions. Digitalization requires increased flexibility and efficiency; at the same time, however, it exacerbates employees’ workload and exposure to stress, contributing to a loss of personal control, isolation, mental exhaustion and the



deterioration of the work-life balance. At the same time, his presentation went beyond an overview of the problems; he also discussed in detail the necessary and possible solutions at the individual, organizational and regulatory levels. At the individual level, the speaker emphasized the importance of setting boundaries, regeneration and conscious use of digital technology; at the organizational level, the benefits of effective work organization, supportive leadership and risk assessment. At the regulatory level, the speaker stated that it is essential to ensure workers' rights, transparency and the right to disconnect.

**Dr Katalin Dudás**, lawyer, acting representative of the workers' side of the National Occupational Safety and Health Committee in her presentation titled “From Remote Work to the Risks Associated with It? Workplace Safety Within the New Context of Home-Based Work,” analysed occupational safety issues related to remote work, pointing out that while working from home offers flexibility, it also gives rise to new types of problems regarding liability, ergonomics, work organization and risk assessment. She emphasized that although hybrid work has now become the norm, appropriate occupational safety regulations and practices are not yet in place.

In her presentation, she briefly outlined the legal frameworks of Hungary and the EU. She presented the new types of physical, work organisation-related, organisational and hidden occupational safety risks associated with remote work. She emphasised that the concept of employer liability needs to be reinterpreted, as the liability has not diminished but has merely been transformed and divided. She stated that targeted, clear and behaviour-changing communication about the risks is necessary, since employees are no longer physically present, so occupational safety training should also be conducted digitally. In her presentation, she noted that the following measures are necessary to reduce the risks: campaigns targeting remote workers; visual checklists; the establishment of minimum standards; the development of basic ergonomics packages; the creation of digital occupational safety tools; online risk assessment; occupational safety training delivered through e-learning; risk communication; targeted, personalized messages; “micro-campaigns” (e.g., eye protection, breaks); accident management protocols for remote work; and the development of a hybrid occupational safety model.

In the concluding part of her presentation, Katalin Dudás outlined the five pillars of effective occupational safety in remote work: ergonomics, the legal framework, training, communication, and the role of leadership. She emphasized that the common thread among best practices is not the introduction of additional rules, but rather making responsibility shareable and functional in an environment that cannot be fully controlled.

**Dr Imre Szilárd Szabó**, president of the National Confederation of Workers’ Councils, attorney, associate professor, explored the issues surrounding labour law regulations on atypical employment relationships in his presentation titled “The Impact of Platform Work and the Digital Age on Labour Law and Labour Relations” and addressed the problem of so-called bogus contracts. The number of platform workers is rising sharply; in the EU, 21.3 million people were employed under such arrangements in 2022, and 43 million in 2025, with projections indicating that this number will reach 50 million by 2030. In Hungary, the number of platform workers is currently around 700,000.

After reviewing the conceptual definitions of platform-based work, the speaker presented EU, international, and Hungarian case law by discussing various court decisions. The speaker then explained how the European Union has addressed issues related to platform work, such as the lack of labour law safeguards due to the improper classification of the legal relationship. Participants gained



insight into the content and context of Directive 2024/2831 on improving working conditions for platform-based work. Imre Szabó then outlined the main principles of the proposed EU Artificial Intelligence Regulation and the EU Framework Agreement on Digitalization, citing practical examples.

The part of the presentation that generated the most interest focused on challenges in collective labour law and a comparison between collective bargaining agreements and competition law. The speaker emphasized that trade unions are increasingly taking on the role of protecting the interests of all economically dependent and self-employed workers, and that regulatory developments are following this trend. In Hungary, meaningful unionisation can currently be observed in two areas: the media industry and the so-called “delivery communities.”

**Dr Marcell Nagy**, forensic occupational medical expert, presented the six areas of artificial intelligence and automation in his lecture titled “Automation and Artificial Intelligence in the World of Work: What Does This Signify in Terms of Workplace Safety?” He discussed opportunities for improving safety, new risks that are not addressed by traditional occupational safety measures, the role of AI in the work of EHS professionals and the relevant legal framework.

He then mentioned five specific areas where AI and automation have a definitely positive impact on improving safety: replacing hazardous tasks (where robots work—humans cannot be injured); predictive safety (AI detects hazards before they cause an accident); wearable devices (real-time data—about the worker, for the worker); VR and simulation in training (practicing hazardous operations—without any risk); support for EHS administration (AI handles the routine tasks—humans make the professional decisions) The next section discussed four new risk categories: physical risks, ergonomic changes, psychosocial risks and so-called “deskilling,” a phenomenon whereby people lose the knowledge and ability to perform work without machines.

After outlining the legal and regulatory framework, the speaker highlighted three key messages: AI and automation are already present not only in industry, but also in office settings, EHS work and occupational safety decisions. Therefore, preparing for them is not an option, but an obligation. Artificial intelligence has a dual impact: it is both a risk and an opportunity. Finally, the role of the occupational safety specialist is not diminishing - it is simply changing.

At the end of the first day, **Dr Imre Szabó** summarized the proceedings and emphasized that the participants actively contributed to the professional discussion. He highlighted that the presentations delivered at the seminar complemented one another, examined the issue from various perspectives, and enabled a nuanced understanding of the current situation, as well as the appropriate development and implementation of responses from trade unions and other interest groups.

Following the conclusion of the official program, participants enjoyed a guided tour of the Light Art Museum Budapest, where they viewed the museum’s latest temporary exhibition, “More Than Human,” whose theme is closely linked to that of the seminar. The exhibition’s posthuman perspective draws attention to the coexistence of humans, nature and artificial systems, and by outlining a thought-provoking cultural framework, it demonstrates how technological development can remain responsible, human-centred and socially sustainable.

**Sigrid Schraml**, Secretary General of EZA, opened the second day of the seminar. In her speech, she emphasized that the impact of digitalization and artificial intelligence on the world of work is one of the most important issues facing Europe today. She stressed that technological progress cannot be



treated merely as an economic or technical issue, because it directly affects workers' health, safety, and dignity. Sigrid Schraml stated that Europe is not merely a common market but also a community of values, founded on solidarity, democracy, social rights and the protection of workers. As she pointed out, many issues cannot be resolved solely at the national level: European cooperation is necessary, while social dialogue at the national level must also be strengthened. According to the Secretary General of EZA, strengthening social dialogue is essential to ensure that the digital transition and the use of AI do not take place without the involvement of workers, but rather with their active participation. She highlighted that one of the most important tasks of EZA is to strengthen the capacity of workers' organizations, support the exchange of experiences, and reinforce social dialogue at the European level. In her opening remarks, she outlined the EU-OSHA (European Agency for Safety and Health at Work) campaign for 2023–2025 and briefly explained what steps can be taken to keep track of the Agency's activities.

The first presentation of the second day, which was based on the active participation of the audience, was given by **Christian Sagartz**, a former Member of the European Parliament and a member of the Burgenland State Parliament, who presented the connections between artificial intelligence, health protection and the future of work from a European perspective, emphasizing that technological progress must go hand in hand with social responsibility and a people-centred approach.

In the first part of his presentation, he explained that we are currently living in an era of global disorder, in which fear of decline is increasingly taking hold in Europe. Our current prosperity rests on three pillars: cheap products from China, cheap Russian raw materials and cheap security provided by the United States through NATO. Serious problems are emerging regarding all three pillars: China has now become the market leader in numerous sectors, energy is currently the most expensive in Europe, and the United States is increasingly reluctant to fulfil its role as a global policeman.

The speaker then outlined the EU's responses to the challenges posed by artificial intelligence. The European Union regulates artificial intelligence based on a risk model and has banned high-risk AI applications, including AI-based social evaluation, emotion recognition in the workplace and schools and real-time biometric mass surveillance in public spaces. Requirements for transparency, documentation, quality assurance and security have been established. Rules regarding general-purpose artificial intelligence have also been introduced; among other things, chatbots must identify themselves as artificial intelligence, and it is mandatory to label deepfakes—that is, images and videos generated by artificial intelligence. Finally, the speaker discussed the opportunities available to workers' representatives and the platforms at their disposal, emphasizing the need for a positive, optimistic approach.

The seminar's final "The Right to Disconnect - How Can We Protect Ourselves from Digital Exploitation?" was delivered by **Prof. Dr Attila Kun**, university professor and head of department, who examined the issues related to the right to disconnect and the humanization of working hours, pointing out that in the digital work environment, rest periods, privacy and mental health are becoming increasingly important priorities in labour law and collective bargaining.

First, he spoke about working time autonomy, highlighting the five pillars of the concept of decent working time as defined by the International Labor Organization. He then presented Directive 2003/88/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council concerning certain aspects of the organization of working time. Pursuant to Article 13 of the Directive, Member States shall take the



necessary measures to ensure that an employer wishing to organize work according to a specific work rhythm shall take into account the general principle that work must be adapted to the worker. The preamble to the directive states that improving the safety, hygiene, health and well-being of workers in the workplace is an objective that cannot be subordinated to purely economic considerations.

He then described the current situation in Hungary, citing numerous examples. He explained that the Labour Code contains indirect provisions regarding the humanization of working hours. The Labour Code stipulates that the employer is required to schedule working hours with due regard to the requirements of healthy and safe working conditions and the nature of the work, and that the employer shall take the employee's interests into account based on a fair assessment; the unilateral determination of the manner of performance may not cause disproportionate harm to the employee.

The presentation then addressed the issue of the right to disconnect. The speaker outlined the various definitions of the concept, provided context regarding the European framework, and explained what is currently on the agenda of EU legislation. He briefly described the regulatory environment in the individual member states and discussed the legal practice in Hungary in more detail. Finally, he posed the question of whether it is possible to make working time more humane.

The seminar focused on what is perhaps the most important challenge currently facing the world of work. The rapid digitization of work has profoundly transformed the way work is organized, performed and monitored. Remote work, platform-based work, the increasingly widespread use of artificial intelligence and digital monitoring tools are all becoming more prevalent. While these innovations offer flexibility and efficiency, they also raise serious concerns regarding occupational safety and health (OSH), particularly with regard to psychosocial risks, the blurring of boundaries between work and private life and new forms of digital inequality.

The seminar successfully achieved many of its stated goals, in part due to the informative, highly professional, and comprehensible presentations, as well as the active and effective participation of the attending participants. Lively discussions ensued following each presentation, during which participants shared their experiences and best practices. The presenters received numerous questions, which gave them the opportunity to share additional information with the participants, thereby further expanding their knowledge and providing practical assistance to union representatives and occupational safety and health professionals in preparing for and developing appropriate policy recommendations and practices, in line with the project's objective of ensuring that unions are prepared for and actively participate in the digital transition.

During the seminar, participants learned how to give appropriate attention to psychosocial risks - such as isolation, burnout and the expectation of constant connectivity. The seminar provided practical guidance on effectively identifying, managing, and preventing these risks. The two-day event helped strengthen trade unions' capacity to address occupational health and safety, as well as labour law issues related to digitalization.

The seminar's structure and topics were based on a practical and participatory approach, focusing on the real challenges of safe and healthy work in the digital age and solutions to address them. In addition to presentations of outstanding professional quality, there was also an opportunity for interactive exchange of experiences, which allowed participants to share their national and sector-specific experiences, identify common challenges and seek practical solutions. The seminar promoted cross-border dialogue and highlighted best practices that can be adopted or adapted in various contexts.