



Declaration on the Social Aspects of Technological Change



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Background Information

The Declaration on the Social Aspects of Technological Change was adopted at the 18-19 November 1989 Ministerial Meeting of the Manpower and Social Affairs Committee (now called the Employment, Labour and Social Affairs Committee). The Declaration stressed the importance of cooperation among government, labour, and the business community in the process of technological change. The Ministers declared that investment, support and assistance is required to respond to technological change and to maximise the opportunities for employees opened up by new technologies within enterprises. The Declaration was abrogated on 26 October 2016.

THE GOVERNMENTS OF OECD MEMBER COUNTRIES¹ consider that rapid development and diffusion of new technologies is vital to economic and social progress. Believing that success in this respect will depend on there being effective means for dealing with the social implications they wish to make known their united views on the matter. They have accordingly agreed on a Declaration on the Social Aspects of Technological Change, as follows. This Declaration is intended to encourage and promote the good practices it describes, within the framework of the respective laws, customs and traditions of the Member countries.

1. CONSIDERING that technological change is necessary to economic and social progress and should be welcomed and stimulated as a means for achieving non-inflationary growth, economic competitiveness and more and better employment as well as enhanced well-being for workers and consumers, rather than resisted because of fears of adverse social consequences, but that its successful introduction depends on adjustment measures to deal with such consequences;

DECLARE that they will adopt policies to facilitate the continuing widespread diffusion and exploitation of new technologies within the framework of policies to promote non-inflationary growth, thereby decreasing unemployment, and to that end seek to ensure that any adverse consequences are mitigated by positive adjustment measures.

2. CONSIDERING that the current rapidly expanding application of new technologies and its potentially differential effects on particular groups can lead to understandable apprehension and concern by workers about the security and quality of their jobs, this being particularly the case in a period of continuing high unemployment which makes the accompanying employment adjustments more difficult;

DECLARE that the policies and practices by which adjustment has customarily been achieved may in some respects be inadequate and may require that different and more innovative approaches to the problems of social adjustment be introduced.

3. CONSIDERING that the economic, educational, social and workplace dimensions of new technologies are interdependent and thus that the continuing efficient and socially acceptable introduction of technological change requires a comprehensive and balanced approach by all concerned;

DECLARE that the prime responsibility for dealing with the social aspects of implementing new technologies is that of employers, employees and their respective organisations, that governments should assist in creating an economic and social environment conducive to innovation and the introduction of new technologies; that they recognise that the continuing efficient and socially acceptable introduction of technological change calls for the timely provision by enterprises of information and consultation with employees and employee representatives according to the modalities of the laws, customs and traditions of each Member country concerning the impact of such change; and that they will encourage as appropriate a dialogue and consultations, i.e. meaningful discussions with all parties concerned, on suitable ways of dealing with the social aspects of new technologies.

4. CONSIDERING that the rapid diffusion of new and sophisticated technologies will lead to changes in the structure of employment by industry, occupation, skill and geographic area, and will lead to the loss of some traditional jobs and the creation of new ones; that for these reasons there is a continuing need for the efficient functioning of the labour market to facilitate the mobility of workers within and between industries, occupations and areas;

DECLARE that the flexible and socially equitable functioning of labour markets and the effective introduction of technological change within enterprises should be encouraged by reducing undue constraints on adjustment and by deepening the support for training and retraining, placement and employment counselling, geographic mobility both of jobs and workers, the better identification of future employment prospects and the exploitation of the employment generating potential of technological change particularly by employers, employees and trade unions.

5. CONSIDERING that the rapid diffusion of new and increasingly sophisticated technologies requires an even more qualified work force with a broader range of skills, and thereby requires

enriched basic education and continuing education, training and retraining of workers - whether employed, unemployed, new entrants or re-entrants to the labour market;

DECLARE that substantial investment and technical support for modernised and responsive research, education and manpower training systems, the provision of training and retraining by employers of employees at all levels is required if the current and future labour force is to respond effectively to the challenge of technological change.

6. CONSIDERING that the introduction of new technologies and its accompanying opportunities for greater flexibility of work brings changes within enterprises, affecting the activities and policies of management and trade unions, widening choice in the content and organisation of work tasks, employees' responsibilities, the organisation of working time, pay structures, the working environment including safety and health; also that change comes about most easily and successfully where it is introduced equitably and with early provision of information and consultation;

DECLARE that it is desirable that according to the modalities of the laws, customs and traditions of each Member country, employees and their representatives be informed and consulted, at an early stage, regarding the impact of the introduction of new technologies and that employers and employees and their representatives should co-operate to fully realise the economic and social benefits of new technologies as well as to prevent or mitigate adverse effects to the maximum extent possible; also that in introducing new technologies the enrichment of work tasks, increase in employees' autonomy, greater flexibility in the organisation of working time, and the improvement of working conditions, including safeguarding the privacy of workers, should be encouraged and that care should be taken to ensure that new technologies should not endanger but whenever possible should improve safety and health.

7. CONSIDERING that if new technologies are to be widely accepted rather than resisted, it is desirable that there be opportunities for advancement, new employment, and adequate assistance for employees displaced or otherwise adversely affected;

DECLARE that they will provide where appropriate, assistance through education and training, job search and income support for workers displaced by new technologies; that they will encourage employers and employee representatives to provide assistance to displaced workers, and to seek to maximise the opportunities for employees opened up by new technologies within enterprises.

¹ Including the European Communities.

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