



MEXICO CITY 2021  
GLOBAL SOCIAL  
ECONOMY FORUM

Conceptual note

**GSEF Global Virtual Forum  
Great Challenges, Greater Solidarity  
Power of Community and SSE  
as a Path for Transformation  
21 October 2020**

**Plenary Session 3  
New Digitalization Era and the Future of Work:  
Challenges and Opportunities**

**Summary**

In the current context of socioeconomic and health crisis due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the digital transformation emerges as an employment possibility for traditionally disadvantaged sectors, such as youth and adults aged 45 and older. Therefore, digitalization is an effective tool for development, but only if it is universal and inclusive, since it offers new tools and opportunities to overcome the difficulties of development in the longer term (ECLAC, 2020).

The digitalization puts in the debate if it substitutes or not the work of the people, the plenary seeks to make a call so that the diverse actors involved join efforts and summon to assume responsibilities to generate fair and equitable work conditions, for a better world in transformation.

**Concept Note**

New technologies are changing the rules of the game. As the Global Commission

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on the Future of Work indicates, humanity is experiencing unprecedented changes and great challenges in the world of work; thus, technological advances –artificial intelligence, automatization, and robotics – will create new jobs, but those who will lose their jobs in this transition may be the least prepared to take advantage of the new opportunities. Today's skills will not fit tomorrow's jobs and newly acquired skills can quickly become outdated.

In the context of the health crisis generated by the propagation of the Sars-CoV-2 virus, Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) allowed, on one hand, a greater dissemination of the health measures adopted by governments, but on the other hand there are challenges of access, use and appropriation.

Digitalization has played a fundamental role in the strategy of health and social distancing, since it has allowed the implementation of work and distance education, and at the same time it has functioned as an essential tool for social interaction without physical contact.

However, the access and use of ICTs is not universal, especially in countries with different levels of development that have high rates of inequality, informality and precariousness in the workplace. Thus, important population groups are excluded from the benefits of the digital era. There are great challenges to be overcome in order to advance in an efficient and inclusive way in the use and access to ICT, ranging from issues related to education and training (digital literacy) to the conditions to accede to technology (internet connection, computer equipment, etc.). This undoubtedly has implications for current workplaces, mainly in terms of access and quality of employment, and it is foreseeable that in the future these repercussions will be greater.

It should be noted that digitalization is providing new employment opportunities from the emergence of new occupations, which leads to a diversification of production towards dynamic sectors that demand and make intensive use of new technologies. Likewise, the OECD points out that in countries with a high incidence of informality, digital platforms represent a path towards formalization, since they can reduce costs and improve the supervision of activities.

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However, there are challenges; mid-level jobs are being increasingly exposed to this profound transformation. It is estimated that 14% of the existing jobs could disappear as a result of automation in the next 15 to 20 years. The debate on the future of work is at the heart of the discussion.

In this sense, it is imperative that all actors involved join efforts and assume their responsibility to generate fair and equitable working conditions, invest in building people's capacities to enhance well-being and promote social inclusion. The changes demand quick and effective responses from public decision makers to adapt labor, fiscal, administrative and social protection regulations to help stop and prevent job precariousness.

As the 2030 Agenda states, "the spread of information and communication technologies and global interconnection has great potential to accelerate human progress, reduce the digital gap and develop knowledge societies". Against this background, cooperatives and other social and solidarity economy enterprises have the opportunity and must take on the challenge of adapting their services, as well as training and providing the necessary infrastructure, for example, for the digitalization of transactions. However, in order for a greater number of people to access, use and benefit from new technologies, serious, innovative and coordinated public policy work is required from governments. This means that it is necessary to develop and implement joint actions between governments and social partners from a local perspective (ILO, 2020).

- Latin American Economic Outlook, Summary, ECLAC, 2020, see in: [https://repositorio.cepal.org/bitstream/handle/11362/46029/3/LEO\\_2020perspectivas\\_es.pdf](https://repositorio.cepal.org/bitstream/handle/11362/46029/3/LEO_2020perspectivas_es.pdf)
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- G Bensusán "Emerging occupations in the digital economy and their regulation in Mexico" Macroeconomics of Development series, No. 20-00124 (LC/TS.2020/28), Santiago, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), 2020. Consulted in: [https://repositorio.cepal.org/bitstream/handle/11362/45481/4/S2000124\\_es.pdf](https://repositorio.cepal.org/bitstream/handle/11362/45481/4/S2000124_es.pdf)

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## Objectives:

- To analyze the challenges and opportunities of the future of work in the light of the digital transformation, especially in relation to labor skills, fair transition, demographic changes and new dynamics of labor relations (collective labor rights, teleworking, atypical work).
- To know how the new digitalization could contribute to a more inclusive and equitable world, what is the role of cooperatives and other social and solidarity economy enterprises to face the challenges.

## Guiding questions

### Round 1

- What are the opportunities offered by digitalization for the future of work?
- In view of the imminent digitalization of broad areas of life, how are we preparing ourselves in the present for the future of work? What are the main challenges that workers, governments, specific sectors of society, as well as young people and older people, are facing in order to make the best use of the new conditions?

### Round 2

- How to ensure a collaborative and social economy in a context of increased digitalization? What is the role of the government in terms of strategies and public policies to promote digital inclusion? What is the role of platform cooperatives?
- How can the SSE take better advantage of the current vertiginous process of digitalization?
- What are the good practices of the SSE in the creation and maintenance of decent work, in a context of digitalization?

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