**Resolution for ACR AGM 2022**

**Title of Resolution**

Addressing the Challenges of the Digital Future

**Name of individual submitting the resolution**

Grace Attard, ACR General Secretary

**Current Situation and Justification**

Digitalisation is developing rapidly and National and European legislation must keep pace.

This calls for a sound and ambitious regulatory framework, including legally binding ethical

 rules and clear rules on liability. Such dynamic development also calls for flexible and

adaptable processes that require constant dialogue between all the parties involved

**Impact of COVID-19 crisis on digital transformation**

With the recent – and ongoing – COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic, society has been facing a reality check when it comes to the use of digital technology and this has posed many new challenges.

The need to communicate, study and work remotely has shown that many people are not adequately prepared for the effective use of up-to-date digital technologies, nor is the digital infrastructure capable of ensuring equal access or inclusive participation via digital technologies.

Digital networks have not been scaled up to cope with the increased load, and sufficient investments will have to be made to make high speed and efficient communication accessible not only for commercial purposes but also for private life, even in remote areas.

Furthermore, quarantine and temporary border closures between Member States have shown that there are some other implications and shortcomings relating to the current state of affairs in the digital single market when it comes to frontier workers and teleworking.

The COVID-19 crisis has also led to a huge increase in e-commerce and cashless payments, along with a rise in unfair and fraudulent practices. The need to change habits because of the measures national governments have taken to counter the spread of COVID-19 might have long lasting effects on consumer practices and work relations in the long term. The positive and negative effects of this change need to be taken into account when developing new policies in that connection.

**Recommendations**

There is the need to stress the importance of digital solutions for the implementation of the Green Deal, especially in relation to the Circular Economy, Energy consumption, raw materials for ICT and recyclability of ICT equipment, which are however among other challenges that need to be tackled.

Europe must therefore take the lead to the just transition to a healthy planet and a new digital world requires that the challenges of green and digital transformation go hand-in-hand, so that digital technologies support the Green Deal with respect of the Sustainable development goals (UN SDGs).

* To ensure a level playing field, rules applying offline – from competition and single market rules and consumer protection to intellectual property, taxation and workers' rights – should also apply online.
* Europe's digital future, based on a human-centred approach will only be successful if people can have trust.– trust in digital life. Appropriate safeguards on privacy, safety and data governance, and, f
* inally, transparency of AI algorithms, are crucial to help gain that trust.

**Further recommendations**

* to invest in the right future technologies,
* to promote the training of people and
* to create trust among citizens, encouraging them to take an active part in the transformation and remain active consumers offline and online
* ensure digital transition is just, sustainable and socially acceptable.

Additional efforts need to be made and the means for the digital training of members of socially vulnerable groups have to be provided, including individuals with low levels of literacy, the elderly who lack skills, experience or even hardware to use internet platforms and who have been left without convenient means for communication, amongst others.

The Covid-19 has made social contacts between family members and others more difficult and social and other public services unavailable or at least less readily available to them. Furthermore, quarantine and temporary border closures between Member States have shown that there are some other implications and shortcomings relating to the current state of affairs in the digital single market when it comes to frontier workers and teleworking. The COVID-19 crisis has also led to a huge increase in e-commerce and cashless payments, along with a rise in unfair and fraudulent practices.

The need to change habits because of the measures national governments have taken to counter the spread of COVID-19 might have long lasting effects on consumer practices and work relations in the long term. The positive and negative effects of this change need to be taken into account when developing new policies in that connection.

**Education in preparation for a digital life**

Education and training that provide digital skills are the key to being prepared for a digital life. The Commission's focus is on digital competences and skills, but the Commission needs to better distinguish between technical and social competences, although both are of vital importance. Creating "workability" – instead of only adjusting "employability" – requires measures for continuing support of life-long learning.

* Technical skills (programming at different levels) will be required for most professionals in the future. This is a challenge for education systems and vocational training organisations in the Member States. Professionals need to be trained in new tools and they need to be aware of the characteristics, limits and risks, because they are ultimately responsible.
* Nevertheless, at least basic technical skills will have to be acquired by as many consumers (citizens) as possible in order to understand, use and engage with digital technologies and tools in a productive, inclusive and safe way. Basic technical skills are necessary to support people of all ages, but especially older people, so that they can understand and safely use digital technologies and tools in their everyday life.
* Social skills do not require particular technical knowledge, but they should be taught at the earliest possible age. Social skills enable children, consumers and citizens to understand the background of digital systems and make the best use of them. They help to identify possible threats from manipulation or crime and to assess the flood of information received. General education is still the best preparation for future developments.
* Special skills, knowledge and awareness are required to use and work with artificial intelligence. In the rapidly changing times of the digital era, merely helping individuals to acquire a minimum set of skills is not enough and it is crucial to ensure that the Skills Guarantee becomes a guaranteed pathway that enables and encourages people to advance further and reach the highest achievable level of skills.
* The role of the social partners in achieving fair and just transition is crucial. It is essential that the strategy anticipates skills needs and thus also support timely and appropriate reskilling and upskilling. The role of the social partners and their involvement is of utmost importance in that regard, as it is also when discussions on the introduction of new technologies are taking place.

**The Commission’s Three Main Pillars**

The various initiatives presented and announced for this year and next are divided into three main pillars:

**Technology that works for people:**

* White Paper on Artificial Intelligence (COM(2020) 65 final/see INT/894);
* Strategy for quantum technologies, blockchain and supercomputing;
* Action Plan on 5G and 6G (presented as COM(2020) 50 final/see TEN/704);
* Digital Education Action Plan and a reinforced Skills Agenda;
* Initiatives to improve labour conditions of platform workers;
* Standards for secure and borderless public sector data flows and services.

**A fair and competitive economy:**

* European Data Strategy (presented as COM(2020) 66 final/see TEN/708);
* Review of the fitness of EU competition rules;
* Industrial Strategy Package;
* Communication on Business Taxation for the 21st century;
* New Consumer Agenda.

**An open, democratic and sustainable society:**

* New and revised rules to deepen the Internal Market for Digital Services;
* Revision of eIDAS Regulation;
* Media and audiovisual Action Plan;
* European Democracy Action Plan;
* European Cybersecurity Strategy;
* Initiative to develop a high precision digital model of Earth;
* A circular electronics initiative;
* Promotion of electronic health records.