



## 8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH



# Peer learning round table on SDG 8: *Just Digital and Green Transitions to Leave No-One Behind*

*Wednesday 2 April, 15:00 – 18:00,*

*Palais des Nations, Room XIX*

*Languages: English, French and Russian*

## Background

The UNECE region is undergoing three major structural transformations — digitalization, the green transition, and demographic shifts including migration — which are reshaping labour markets, economic structures, and social protection. These transitions present opportunities for inclusive and sustainable growth but also pose challenges for ensuring decent work, fair wages, social protection, labour rights and equitable economic participation for all.

Key challenges include:

- **Boosting economic productivity, competitiveness and innovation (Targets 8.2;8.3):** innovation is a critical component in driving green and digital transformations. It extends beyond the generation of new products and processes to larger transformations in the economic and social ecosystem.
- **Decoupling economic growth from environmental degradation (Target 8.4).**
- **Restructuring many industries, creating new green jobs and economic opportunities while mitigating employment risks workers are exposed to (Targets 8.5.2, 8.6.1).**
- **Bridging digital skills gaps (Targets 8.5.2, 8.6.1):** Rapid digitalization is widening skill gaps, particularly among youth, women, older workers, migrants and displaced people, and vulnerable groups.
- **Ensuring fair access to digitalization (Targets 8.2.1, 8.3.1):** Ensure technological upgrading and innovation by expanding digital infrastructure, particularly in rural and underserved areas, to prevent economic exclusion.
- **Safeguarding decent work in the digital economy (Targets 8.8.1, 8.8.2):** With the rise of platform work and automation, employers and workers face great challenges ahead, especially for those in non-traditional employment arrangements with women, young people and migrants being the most affected by this phenomenon.

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- **Addressing labour shortages caused inter alia by current demographic shifts**, further exacerbated by scarce skills recognition policies and pathways for safe, orderly and regular labour migration to the region.

This peer learning session will explore policy responses, national case studies, and innovative approaches to supporting a just digital and green transition, while ensuring economic inclusion, social protection, and lifelong learning opportunities for all workers.

## Guiding Questions:

### 1. *Supporting Just Green Transition for sustainable economic growth and decent jobs*

1. How can the green transition be designed to maximize economic growth and decent job creation while ensuring social inclusion, equity and respect for both human and labour rights and standards?
2. How can resource efficiency, circular economy approaches, and innovation be leveraged to decouple economic growth from environmental degradation?
3. What are the key policies and strategies for Leaving No-One Behind and equipping workers - including informal sector workers, youth, women, older workers, migrants and persons with disabilities - with the skills needed for a green economy, particularly in the regions and sectors most affected by decarbonization?
4. How can entrepreneurship and innovation be harnessed to accelerate green growth and to generate benefits and opportunities for all?

### 2. Ensuring a Just Digital Transition in the context of demographic shifts

1. How can digitalization and innovation be harnessed to achieve sustainable economic growth and decent work in an inclusive digital economy?
2. What policies and investments are needed to close digital skills gaps and to guarantee equal access to digital skills training, particularly for those facing barriers to access employment and education e.g., informal sector workers, youth, women, older workers, migrants and persons with disabilities?
3. How can labour and social protection policies adapt to a rapidly evolving world addressing challenges related to platform work, automation, and AI while ensuring fair working conditions and decent employment opportunities based on fundamental principles and rights at work?
4. How can digitalization enhance labour market matching, including for migrant workers, while ensuring fair working conditions and labour protection?

### 3. Cross-cutting questions for both panels

1. How can age, gender-responsive and migration inclusive policies expand access to digital and green job opportunities, fostering innovation and entrepreneurship?
2. What are some effective approaches or schemes within the region that can be scaled up to better match migrant workers' skills and entrepreneurship with market needs while ensuring fair working conditions?

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3. What investments and incentives are needed to create decent jobs, transform entrepreneurial ideas into viable businesses, and ensure economic resilience in the digital and green transition?
4. What types of regulations are needed in the context of a just and digital transition to ensure fairness, promote inclusion in social protection systems, guarantee fair contracts, and support the right to collective bargaining to uphold fundamental labour rights?
5. What role does social dialogue play in addressing policy challenges to foster productive enterprises, promote a fairer economy, build a more stable and equitable society, and support labour market transitions through the development of equitable policies?

## Programme

<b><i>Theme 1: Supporting Just Transition for sustainable economic growth and decent jobs</i></b>	
15:00 – 15:05	Welcome and setting the scene
15:05 – 15:45	<p>Moderated interventions from panel speakers</p> <p><b>Moderator:</b> Fiona McCluny UN Resident Coordinator, Albania</p> <p><b>Panellists:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• George Panteli, Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth, Cyprus.</li><li>• Bojana Femić Radosavović, Executive Director of the Innovation Fund of Montenegro</li><li>• Kjell Hakan Narfelt, Chief Strategy Advisor, Vinnova (Sweden Innovation Agency)</li><li>• Melina Matzawrakos, Policy Officer, Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Climate and Environmental Protection, Regions and Water Management, Austria</li><li>• Diana Junquera Curiel, Director for Energy and Just Transition, IndustriALL</li><li>• Robert Marinkovic, Adviser, International Organisation of Employers (IOE)</li><li>• Patrick Semadeni, CEO, Semadeni Industry Group</li><li>• Professor Ermira Shehi, Polytechnic University of Tirana, Albania</li></ul>
15:45 – 16:20	Interactions with the panel and interventions from floor
16:20 – 16:25	Concluding remarks, key messages and closing
16:25 – 16:35	Health break
<b><i>Theme 2: Ensuring a Just Digital Transition in the context of demographic shifts</i></b>	
16:35 – 16:40	Welcome and setting the scene
16:40 – 17:20	<p>Moderated interventions from panel speakers</p> <p><b>Moderator:</b> Jaroslaw Ponder, Head European Regional Office ITU</p> <p><b>Panellists:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• H.E. Vladimir Cuc, Ambassador, Permanent Mission of Moldova in Geneva</li><li>• Mr. Vali Guliyev, Head of the State Labour Inspection Service, Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of Population, Azerbaijan.</li></ul>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Łukasz Różyck, First Counsellor, Deputy Permanent Representative, Polish EU Council Presidency</li><li>Karin Voodla, Third Secretary, Permanent Mission of Estonia, Geneva</li><li>Manuel Veguín García, Head of International Relations of the Institute for Older People and Social Services (IMSERSO), Spain</li><li>Radka Sibille, Digital Affairs Advisor, EU Delegation to the UN in Geneva</li><li>Anton Leppik, Executive Secretary, Pan-European Regional Council (ITUC-PERC)</li><li>Predrag Bubalo, CEO, SDPS, Serbia</li></ul>
17:20 – 17:55	Interactions with the panel and interventions from floor
17:55 – 18:00	Concluding remarks, key messages and closing

*Organized by ILO, ITU and UNECE (with the UN regional Digital Transformation Group and contributions from FAO, IOM, UNEP, UNFPA, UNICEF, UNIDO, UNOPS and UN Women).*

**SDG 8.1** Sustain per capita economic growth in accordance with national circumstances, with at least 7% GDP growth per year in least developed countries.

**SDG 8.2** Achieve higher levels of economic productivity through diversification, technological upgrading, and innovation, including a focus on high-value added and labour-intensive sectors.

**SDG 8.3** Promote development-oriented policies that support productive activities, decent job creation, entrepreneurship, creativity, and innovation, and encourage the formalization and growth of micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises, including through access to financial services.

**SDG 8.4** Improve progressively, through 2030, global resource efficiency in consumption and production and endeavour to decouple economic growth from environmental degradation, in accordance with the 10-Year Framework of Programs on Sustainable Consumption and Production.

**SDG 8.5** Achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including young people and persons with disabilities, and equal pay for work of equal value.

**SDG 8.6** Substantially reduces the proportion of youth not in employment, education, or training by 2020.

**SDG 8.7** Take immediate and effective measures to eradicate forced labour, end modern slavery and human trafficking, and secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour, including recruitment and use of child soldiers, and by 2025 end child labour in all its forms.

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**SDG 8.8** Protect labour rights and promote safe and secure working environments for all workers, including migrant workers, in particular women migrants, and those in precarious employment.

**SDG 8.9** By 2030, devise and implement policies to promote sustainable tourism that creates jobs and promotes local culture and products.

**SDG 8.A** Strengthen the capacity of domestic financial institutions to encourage and expand access to banking, insurance, and financial services for all.

**SDG 8.B** Increase Aid for Trade support for developing countries, particularly least developed countries, including through the Enhanced Integrated Framework for Trade-Related Technical Assistance to Least Developed Countries.

**SDG 8.C** Develop and operationalize a global strategy for youth employment and implement the Global Jobs Pact of the International Labour Organization.