

The Potential of Digitalisation and Social Dialogue in Ensuring Post-Pandemic Labour Market Sustainability: Priorities for Ukraine

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Abstract

The article substantiates promising areas of resource mobilisation to counter the negative effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the labour market, namely, through the involvement of the potential of digital, information and communication technologies and the introduction of innovative mechanisms into the system of social dialogue in the labour field at the national level. The conceptual basis of the research is the four-pillar policy framework for tackling the socio-economic impact of the COVID-19 crisis, developed by the International Labour Organization as a basic tool to address the risks and threats of the COVID-19 pandemic for global and national labour markets. This framework was used as a cross-cutting analytical scheme to analyse Ukrainian realities and further to structure the potential of digitalisation and social dialogue for overcoming the negative impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the Ukrainian labour market and for further post-pandemic recovery.

Based on the modern platform approach, the authors propose a social innovation – a 3-element model of socially responsible partnership (SRP Platform), which allows significantly updating (or even rebooting) the system of communication and interaction between the social dialogue participants in Ukraine using the potential of modern network, information and communication technologies. Implementating such a model will contribute to the renewal of the social dialogue system in Ukraine and, thus, further effective counteraction against the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, ensuring the sustainable functioning of the Ukrainian labour market, and to the formation of an effective anti-pandemic state policy. Both the conceptual basis and general mechanism for implementing the SRP platform are (to a large extent) universal and can be adapted to renew social dialogue systems not only in Ukraine but also in other post-Soviet countries with a tripartite system.

Keywords: digitalisation, social dialogue, labour market sustainability, employment, platform economy, socially responsible partnership, Ukraine, COVID-19 pandemic, post-pandemic recovery.

Introduction

“Building back better” is the leitmotif, a key principle of the moment declared by the International Labour Organization (ILO) to minimise the devastating effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and restore global and national labour markets (ILO, 2020a, p. 16). The implementation of this key task presupposes an active search for effective strategic decisions and appropriate tools for their implementation both at the level of the world community and at the level of national governments and states. For the moment, this ambitious task largely determines the agenda of leading international organisations and structures, in particular, the United Nations (UN), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the European Commission, the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC), the International Organization of Employers (IOE) and other relevant international bodies.

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What could be the ways and priority areas of “building back better” under the current conditions and trends? After all, the COVID-19 pandemic, despite some progress in vaccine development and mass vaccination, has not abated. New strains of the virus, new waves of the pandemic and the associated severe quarantine restrictions are emerging constantly. Therefore, the situation remains unstable and uncertain. However, regardless of further development of the pandemic, the task of rehabilitating the world economy and further post-pandemic recovery remains unalterable (National institute of strategic studies, 2020, p. 5).

The scientific community seeks answers to urgent questions of today, emphasising that the processes of deep structural changes launched by the pandemic will go far beyond anti-epidemic measures and will form configurations of socio-economic systems that in the long run should become more resistant to the depressive effects of biosocial components (National institute of strategic studies, 2020, p. 5). It should be borne in mind that modern labour market transformations are largely the result of a number of global trends, above all rapid and comprehensive digitalisation and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. In fact, in the context of “building back better” researching the impact of digitalisation¹ on labour and employment deserves special attention. It is digitalisation that leads to a deep transformation of the system of social and labour relations, changes their nature, allows to move to fundamentally new forms of interaction between workers and employers, public authorities and other labour market actors. These issues should have priority in shaping the global agenda for the sustainable functioning of global and national labour markets for further post-pandemic recovery.

In the system of interaction between the actors of social and labour relations (hereinafter SLR), the pandemic has given rise to two contradictory tendencies. On the one hand, there is an urgent need to increase the intensity of interaction of SLR actors to develop and implement strategies for effective response to pandemic hazards. On the other hand, there are significant quarantine restrictions (or even direct bans) on intergroup and interpersonal interaction in their traditional forms. This situation actualises the need to move to an updated format of interaction between socio-economic development actors (including the main SLR actors) based on the widespread use of the potential of modern digital, information and communication technologies. This will allow to change the environment, nature, and methods of such interaction, in particular, to comply with sanitary and epidemiological requirements (quarantine restrictions) and provide greater resistance to *force majeure*. Modern digital information and communication technologies allow interacting online without restrictions, providing protection against the threat of infection and higher resistance to the effects of sanitary and epidemiological hazards, so the feasibility of their maximum use can be considered obvious. Therefore, changes in the theoretical, methodological and practical fields become fundamentally important, at almost all levels and aspects – organisational, managerial, regulatory, legal, communicative, and so on.

Another important context-forming aspect necessary for completing the logic of this study is the rapid development of the platform economy, accompanied by systemic changes, in particular:

- deepening of contradictions between the traditional system of SLR and new types of relations emerging with the formation of a digital platform economy;
- strengthening labour market deregulation, loss of state control in this area;
- erosion and gradual disappearance of traditional collective bargaining mechanisms that are based on long-term and formalised relations.

Accordingly, in the practical field all these actualise the demand for:

- improvement of legal regulation, institutional, infrastructural support of the transition to non-traditional social and labour relations;

¹ Hereinafter digitalisation means the comprehensive introduction of digital technologies in all spheres of life and the constant growth of the share of the digital economy in the structure of the national economies. The digital economy is an economy based on modern digital, information and communication technologies. Digital transformations are the introduction of modern information technologies in all spheres of the national economies, which involves the installation of modern equipment and software, changing approaches to management, corporate culture, external communications, etc.

- appropriate renewal of the system of social dialogue, creation of effective mechanisms of social protection for platform workers;
- ensuring collective representation of the interests of SLR actors in the age of digitalisation, creating opportunities for employees to integrate effectively into new systems of interaction between employees and employers, between employees themselves, etc.

Thus, the profound systemic changes in the global and national labour markets (caused by the forced digitalisation of the economy and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic) actualised the need to develop comprehensive innovative solutions for fundamentally renewing the system of social dialogue on a modern technological basis, including the use of modern digital, information, communication and network technologies to ensure effective interaction of SLR actors. Implementation of the “building back better” principle becomes more real with the use of innovative approaches and solutions and other means that contribute to the recovery while making socio-economic systems more resilient against the impact of *force majeure*.

The *objective of the research* is to reveal the potential of digitalisation and social dialogue in ensuring the sustainability of national labour markets in the context of overcoming the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic (on the example of Ukraine).

In this study, the authors focus on the following aspects:

- use of the basic principles of the ILO policy on counteracting the risks and threats of the COVID-19 pandemic and ensuring the sustainability of national labour markets, their adaptation to the conditions of Ukraine in the context of developing social dialogue and involving the potential of digitalisation;
- the importance and comprehensiveness of the impact of digitalisation as a systemic phenomenon on the entire system of global and national labour markets (in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic), as well as on the system of SLR and social dialogue;
- definition and substantiation of innovative mechanisms and tools for updating the traditional SLR system, the system of social dialogue on a new technological basis (based on the potential of digital, information and communication technologies in order to overcome the COVID-19 pandemic and minimise its consequences).

The main subject field and delineation of research results (in the context of achieving the objective stated) are as follows:

- defining and substantiating promising areas for the mobilisation of socio-economic resources and communication mechanisms to counteract the negative impact of the pandemic on national labour markets;
- development of an innovative tool - a platform for socially responsible partnership (hereinafter - the SRP platform), which allows moving to an updated system of interaction between social dialogue actors on a platform (digital) basis (this is the main author's result of the study);
- identifying priority areas for using the potential of social dialogue (in an updated format) to overcome the risks and threats of the COVID-19 pandemic, ensuring the stability of the national labour market in the context of post-pandemic recovery of the Ukrainian economy.

To achieve the objective of research, the authors use the concepts of a system approach, methods of systems analysis, comparative analysis and synthesis, generalisation of ILO recommendations, and the existing international experience of overcoming the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic; methods of social design, certain elements of path dependence and SWOT-analysis are also used.

Basic principles of the ILO policy on countering the risks and threats of the COVID-19 pandemic: main content and applicability for Ukraine

In order to provide a decent response to the challenges facing the world today through the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic and to counter its negative consequences, the International Labour Organization points out that policy responses need to be sustained and agile, addressing five key challenges (ILO, 2020a):

- finding the right balance and sequence of health and economic and social policy interventions, particularly in light of the currently increasing infection numbers in many countries;
- ensuring that policy interventions are maintained at the necessary scale while being made increasingly effective and efficient;
- filling the stimulus gap in emerging and developing countries, which requires greater international solidarity, while improving the effectiveness of stimulus measures;
- tailoring policy support for vulnerable and hard-hit groups, including women, young people and informal workers – as labour income losses are massive, income support measures for hard-hit groups should be a policy priority;
- using social dialogue as an effective mechanism for policy responses to the crisis.

The ILO experts emphasise that national governments, employers and workers’ organisations have to mobilise resources and combine them effectively to counter the long-term negative economic and social consequences of a pandemic, to restore full-fledged jobs, and to maximise workers’ protection in their workplaces (ILO, 2020a, p. 13). Given the abovementioned need to maintain the right balance between stimulating demand, supporting businesses and protecting workers, the ILO has proposed four-pillar policy framework, based on international labour standards, for tackling the socio-economic impact of the COVID-19 crisis (ILO, 2020b, p. 4) (Table 1).

Table 1: The ILO’s four-pillar policy framework, based on international labour standards, for tackling the socio-economic impact of the COVID-19 crisis

<p style="text-align: center;">PILLAR 1</p> <p>Stimulating the economy and employment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active fiscal policy • Accommodative monetary policy • Lending and financial support to specific sectors, including the health sector 	<p style="text-align: center;">PILLAR 2</p> <p>Supporting enterprises, jobs and incomes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extend social protection for all • Implement employment retention measures • Provide financial/tax and other relief for enterprises
<p style="text-align: center;">PILLAR 3</p> <p>Protecting workers in the workplace</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthen OSH measures • Adapt work arrangements (e.g. teleworking) • Prevent discrimination and exclusion • Provide health access for all • Expand access to paid leave 	<p style="text-align: center;">PILLAR 4</p> <p>Relying on social dialogue for solutions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthen the capacity and resilience of employers’ and workers’ organisations • Strengthen the capacity of governments • Strengthen social dialogue, system of collective labour agreements and labour relations institutions and processes

Source: ILO, 2020b, p. 4

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the economy and the labour market in Ukraine from the very beginning followed a fairly standard scenario, typical for many other countries, without significant differences (the difference was more in the scale, capacity and resources of the state’s activities to protect its citizens, rather than in the areas of this activity). Therefore, this basic ILO’s four-pillar policy framework is fully applicable to Ukraine. Further in this study, this framework

will be used as a basis for determining the content of measures to ensure the sustainable functioning of labour markets in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic (based on the use of the potential of digitalisation and the social innovation proposed by the authors - the abovementioned platform of socially responsible partnership - the SRP platform). The SRP platform proposed by the authors is fully in line with ILO recommendations for national governments in Pillar 4 "Relying on Social Dialogue for solutions". Primarily the idea and mechanism of implementation of the SRP platform were developed to update the existing system of social dialogue in Ukraine, but this idea is universal and can be adapted to update the systems of social dialogue in post-Soviet countries with a tripartite system.

The potential of digitalisation in ensuring the sustainability of the Ukrainian labour market in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic

Analysis of the impact of global megatrends under the COVID-19 pandemic shows that the spread of the pandemic coincided with the active phase of digitalisation, unintentionally accelerating the realisation of the accumulated potential of digital technologies and initiating the search for new solutions to counter the pandemic and its devastating socioeconomic consequences. The demand for the use of digital "tools" has focused the vector of digital transformation on the development of technological aspects in sectors of the economy directly related to the sector of vital services: online communications (primarily information, control, tracking), banking, healthcare, education, e-government, data exchange and broadband, e-commerce, finance, personal data protection, etc. The pandemic has also caused a significant increase in the number of initiatives based on digital solutions and a revision of the current digital agenda by relevant authorities, large technology companies, volunteers and businesses all around the world (HSE University, 2020, p. 3). A large number of new digital initiatives aimed directly at combating the pandemic has also been formed (HSE University, 2020, pp. 15-19). In fact, the essence of these initiatives, regardless of their specific scope (health, education, administrative services, etc.), is to create a safer (from an epidemiological point of view) environment for human interaction, using the capabilities of modern digital technologies. Thus, the development of trends and processes related to digitalisation and the development of Industry 4.0 has gained significant momentum under the COVID-19 pandemic, but more situational than systemic.

Today, both international and national monitoring studies are conducted to monitor the situation in the field of labour and employment. They indicate an extremely rapid transition to remote forms of employment (including EU) (Ahrendt et al., 2020; Sostero et al., 2020). It is noted that the COVID crisis created an impetus for a specific revolution in teleworking, which has been awaited for a generation, but which has largely failed to materialise. Certain benefits of teleworking, for both workers and employers, were not critical under normal circumstances, but became critical in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic (Kolomiyetc, 2020), which led to such a rapid growth of teleworking. According to an e-survey, about 40% of the paid working time during the crisis was done by workers from home (Ahrendt et al., 2020, p. 59). In Ukraine, the spread of remote employment has become a factor in increasing economic stability and at the same time a mechanism for protection against sanitary and epidemiological hazards.

Thus, life practice has convincingly shown that the use of the modern digital, information and communication technologies, the transition to remote work, and the spread of non-standard forms of employment have a powerful potential which has been actively implemented during the pandemic and is able to ensure greater stability of global and national labour markets under conditions of quarantine restrictions and *force majeure*.

At the same time, there are some significant factors in Ukraine whose impact hinders the spread of teleworking and involving the potential of digitalisation to ensure sustainability of the Ukrainian labour market under the COVID-19 pandemic (Filipchuk & Lomonosov, 2020), in particular:

- 1. The structure of the economy.** During the period of severe quarantine restrictions, workers employed in education, telecommunications, professional and scientific activities, and, in part, civil service and trade, actually switched to teleworking. But the problem is that sectors that provide the largest share of the Ukrainian GDP can't move to remote work: agricultural production, processing and mining, energy, construction, transport, etc. The possibility of transition to remote work in these areas is deeply limited precisely because of the specifics of these industries. Therefore, in Ukraine the opportunities for the spread of remote employment are fundamentally limited by the sectoral structure of the economy
- 2. Development, availability and prevalence of modern technologies** in the country - this parameter is related to the assessment of the readiness of states to introduce physical distance (which actually means the available opportunities to work remotely) using three indices: reliability of platforms such as e-commerce, digital media, instruments of remote communication (for example, Zoom or Skype), distribution and stability of electronic payments for transactions and resilience of the internet infrastructure to traffic interruptions (Chakravorti & Chaturvedi, 2020). In Ukraine, the situation in these parameters is rather unfavourable.
- 3. Features of the way of life of the people** widespread in the country, a common type of organisational and household culture - the specifics of behavioral models of the working population, operational and communication processes; housing and living conditions, the structure of households, gender roles and patterns of work-life balance, the way of life of the majority of the population, models of combining work and leisure. All these features, i.e. personal life plays a significant role in the opportunities for the spread of remote work. In general, Ukrainians, with the exception of the most developed large cities, tend to have a way of life that is typical for an industrial society, with a significant share of the post-Soviet mentality. Although Ukraine is characterised by a significant gap between the generations, young people already adhere to a completely modern worldview.

The government of Ukraine has been actively responding to the situation since the beginning of the pandemic. Thus, the range of activities of the Unified portal for providing public online services to the people "Diya", created within the framework of the "Digital State" project, has expanded and will subsequently unite all government departments into a single convenient and effective online system (Ministry of Digital Transformation, 2020). The State Employment Service of Ukraine has created a platform for career guidance and career development (its purpose is to provide free career guidance services remotely) (State Employment, 2020). It is noteworthy that the Economic Incentive Program for overcoming the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic in Ukraine was approved, which complements the comprehensive reform program in Ukraine.

Under the first wave of severe quarantine restrictions in Ukraine, Ukrainian companies switched to remote operation as much as possible, and all them were mostly set to retain the number of staff. Thus, according to a research study conducted by the sociological group "Rating", as of March 2020, 29% of the adult population of Ukraine worked remotely (Rating Group, 2020), while (according to other studies) in April 2020 in cities with a population of more than 50 thousand people already 40% of employees worked remotely part-time or full-time (Filipchuk & Lomonosov, 2020). Eventually, the situation stabilised somewhat, vaccines were developed and widely used, and quarantine restrictions were significantly softened (and sometimes even lifted). All this has allowed many forced teleworkers to return to their usual forms of work. One year after the first wave of quarantine, in May 2021, in Ukraine 21% of economically active citizens fully or partially continue to work remotely (Razumkov Center, 2021). However, a new wave of a pandemic caused by a different virus strain can quickly return the situation to its previous level. In this case, this process will be less complicated, because many employees have already gained some experience and created the technical conditions for a quick return to remote work (if necessary).

In Ukraine, there is a significant spreading of platform employment². Digital work is available in Ukraine through more than 40 different platforms. It is expected that their number will continue to grow. These platforms include those that serve the Ukrainian market, as well as those that serve the post-Soviet, Russian-speaking and international markets. It is common to define “platform economy” as an economic activity based on platforms, which means online systems that provide comprehensive standard solutions for interaction between users, including commercial transactions. Some employees also regularly find work through social networks (Aleksynska, Bastrakova & Kharchenko, 2018). Considering the increase of remote forms of work among a growing share of the Ukrainian working population as compared to the pre-pandemic time, appropriate political and regulatory measures are needed (Filipchuk & Lomonosov, 2020).

Currently, the legal framework for creating conditions of safety and social protection against COVID-19 is being formed and clarified. Among the anti-crisis measures initiated by the Ukrainian government, it is worth noting the adoption and implementation of the Law of Ukraine “On Amendments to Certain Legislative Acts of Ukraine Aimed at Providing Additional Social and Economic Guarantees in Connection with the Spread of Coronavirus (COVID-19) (Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, 2020)”. This law contains norms related to the regulation of flexible working hours during the transition to remote (home) work, determination of conditions and procedure for the payment of downtime (including for the period of quarantine), provision of partial unemployment benefits for employees of small and medium-sized enterprises and for employers; increasing the minimum amount of unemployment benefits, strengthening the social protection of health workers who risk their lives in the fight against COVID-19, etc.

Thus, Ukraine is gradually creating certain conditions in order to promote teleworking and involve the potential of digitalisation in overcoming socio-economic risks and dangers on the Ukrainian labour market.

The generalisation of the authors’ research results (Pankova, Ishchenko & Kasperovich, 2020) allows to determine the main areas for the involvement of digitalisation resources in each of the “pillars” identified by the ILO to restore and ensure greater stability of the economy and labour markets in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. These areas are quite universal and can be used when implementing the anti-pandemic policy not only in Ukraine but also in other post-Soviet countries. The main ones, in accordance with the structure of the ILO’s four-pillar anti-pandemic policy framework, are the following.

Pillar 1. Stimulating the economy and employment

- promoting the digitalisation of various sectors of the economy, focusing on their technological re-equipment in order to ensure their stability under the quarantine restrictions;
- implementation of digitalisation programs aimed at ensuring the smooth operation of critical infrastructure and the development of sectors that can function successfully under the quarantine restrictions;
- development of platform economy and other modern forms of economic activity based on the use of digital and network technologies.

Pillar 2. Supporting enterprises, jobs and incomes

- wide support of enterprises that introduce the newest technologies that can provide a significantly new level of protection in the workplace or can provide remote work;
- creating favourable conditions for the accelerated development of distance learning and training systems;
- providing opportunities for the transition to new (first of all - remote) forms of work, introduction of flexible working hours.

² In this research, platform employment is used in a broad sense - as a manifestation of the development of “economy on demand” and “employment on demand”, where the organizers of demand - platforms are an electronic place for transforming the work of workers under the scheme: “product-service-information”.

Pillar 3. Protecting workers in the workplace

- creation of safe workplaces through the introduction of non-standard forms of employment, innovative mechanisms for organising the labour process, the transition to remote work;
- significant increase of epidemiological protection of workplaces in cases (professions) when remote work is impossible – through the introduction of smart technologies, technologies for optimising production processes, reengineering business processes in order to minimise direct contacts between employees;
- improvement of health protection mechanisms, in particular - through the introduction of remote diagnostics and treatment technologies;
- carrying out information campaigns for the creating and development of security policy for all SLR actors, introduction of measures to provide informational anti-epidemiological support.

Pillar 4. Relying on social dialogue for solutions

- introduction of social innovation in the field of social dialogue, focused on involving the potential of modern digital, information and communication technologies, in particular - providing technical opportunities for coordinated interaction of SLR actors through the development and implementation of digital platforms for such interaction and communication;
- intensification of social dialogue to overcome the negative consequences of the pandemic and ensure coordinated interaction between the state, civil society, local communities, business, health care institutions and other actors – at the national, sectoral, territorial and enterprise levels;
- full consideration of the rights and guarantees of workers at the enterprise level through a system of collective bargaining in accordance with the threats posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

One of the priorities of public policy aimed at involving the potential of digitalisation to ensure the sustainable functioning of the national labour markets in the context of COVID-19 pandemic is forming of an integrated information-communication and analytical-forecasting system to ensure decision-making. This will provide a basis for the formation and implementation of an effective and flexible anti-pandemic policy by the legislative and executive authorities of the state, the participants of the social dialogue in the field of labour and employment, aimed at supporting the enterprises of those sectors of the economy that really reduce the risks of a pandemic, as well as to support those sectors of the economy and those categories of workers (and their families) who are most affected by the pandemic. The author's concept of updating the system of social dialogue in Ukraine on the basis of creating a platform of socially responsible partnership (SRP) will contribute to the implementation of this priority in practice.

A platform of socially responsible partnership as social innovation aimed to update the system of social dialogue in counteracting the risks and threats of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The formation and development of social dialogue between the participants of social partnership, which has been taking place in Ukraine for almost 30 years, long before the COVID-19 pandemic, was not focused on social integration, social solidarity or the introduction of principles of openness and transparency of payment and labour conditions. The activities of the social partners within the dialogue were formal. All fundamental issues of economic and social policy were regulated by the state, more precisely - by a limited number of large businesses owners, who have the ability to directly influence government decisions. The main reason for this situation is the imbalance and lack of common interests of employees and owners - a precondition without which effective social partnership is impossible.

The current state of the social dialogue system in Ukraine and the main trends of how it changes can be assessed as negative. The main obstacles to the constructive interaction of participants in social dialogue in Ukraine are the following:

- formality of social dialogue in Ukraine, lack of strategic vision of ways to update the social dialogue system in the face of the newest challenges and threats, passivity of state bodies in building stable and constructive partnerships in the SLR system, low level of trust in each other;
- inefficient internal and external communication, lack of initiative of the parties of social dialogue on the effective transition to the modern forms of information and communication interaction;
- weak, formalised activity of the National Tripartite Socio-Economic Council (NTSEC) as a joint representative body of the parties of the social dialogue at the national level;
- obsolescence of the current General Agreement (in particular, its content does not take into account the mechanisms for overcoming the threats caused by the pandemic and forced digitalisation), instability, erosion of the framework of collective bargaining in the SLR system.

Thus, the need for a rapid response to new challenges and threats, for the elimination of obstacles mentioned above, create a demand for a systemic and wide update of the current system of social dialogue in Ukraine. Effective, responsible interaction of the SLR actors – between employers, trade unions, state authorities, joint representative bodies – could become an important lever of counteraction to the newest risks and threats connected with COVID-19 pandemic through the search for optimal solutions and balancing the interests of partners for the common good, i.e. the safety and health of Ukrainian citizens.

ILO's recommendations, worldwide practice and the experience of national governments prove that an effective, sustainable system of social and labour relations can be built on a platform of effective partnership between the participants of the social dialogue, which is based on the balance of their interests, productive cooperation and social responsibility in order to solve emerging problems to ensure economic stability, balanced development, and safety of life. Social innovation that can renew the existing system of social dialogue must be built on these principles, through the involvement of the potential of digital, information, communication and other new technologies into the process of communication and interaction of the SLR actors.

Mobilisation of resources needed to counter the negative impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the national labour market requires the development and implementation of social innovation, able to transform traditional approaches to the organisation of interaction between labour market actors and ensure the effectiveness of social dialogue under the newest conditions. Such social innovations must be embodied in a new model of social dialogue. The ideal model should be flexible, with high adaptive capacity to respond to the changes on global and local levels. Thus, in recent years in Europe there has been a noticeable tendency of reducing effectiveness of centralised models of social dialogue with an increasing role of a decentralised model. However, for many post-Soviet countries, such trends will not be effective. The role of the state as an actor of social relations, as a part of social dialogue remains significant and decisive, because in crises the responsibility of the state increases – as a partner in social dialogue, as an arbiter and key actor, which creates the rules for doing business and guarantees the protection of labour and social rights of citizens. This is emphasised by the UN and the ILO.

Social dialogue is an effective method of collective interaction of actors of different levels, from global (supranational) to local, because it ensures joint decision-making on the basis of joint responsibility to solve important problems. In fact, each of the national economies has its own characteristics and to some extent is in search of its own model of social dialogue. This largely applies to post-Soviet countries, where a strong and responsible position of the state is the key to the formation and constructive interaction of the SLR actors and the formation of its own innovative model of social dialogue.

The global (international) level dialogue is based on the Global Deal platform – it is a system of global partnership, whose the purpose is to jointly solve the problems of the global labour market and provide workers around the world the opportunity to use the benefits of globalisation (ILO, 2020c). As it is stated in the report “The Global Deal for Decent Work and Inclusive Growth: Social Dialogue, Skills and COVID-19”, social dialogue plays a key role in mitigating the impact of shocks such as the current pandemic on business and workers, making labour markets more stable. Shaping trust and equity, governments and social partners use social dialogue to facilitate the implementation of short-term job-saving mechanisms and flexible working hours aimed at balancing social distancing in the workplace while increasing productivity. Social dialogue and collective bargaining also help to manage the risks posed by COVID-19 to health and safety in the workplace (ILO, 2020d).

At the national level, the renewal of the social dialogue system, as mentioned above, should be carried out through the introduction of social innovation. An example of such an innovation is the **platform for socially responsible partnership (SRP platform)** proposed by the authors of the article – as a powerful resource able to ensure the adoption and implementation of joint, balanced and agreed decisions based on a multi-actor frame (involvement of the maximum number of SRL actors in the interaction and decision-making). The SRP platform integrates the principles and mechanisms of social responsibility³, social partnership, social dialogue, public-private partnerships and is based on the broad involvement of the potential of modern digital, information and communication technologies.

Creating the SRP platform is one of the ways to update the existing system of social dialogue on the basis of platform ideology, in order to balance the social interests of the social dialogue participants in the field of labour and employment, finding compromises and making agreed decisions. The implementation of such a platform could create the basis for updating the modern model of public administration in general, which meets European requirements.

From the viewpoint of its practical implementation, the SRP platform is positioned as a national level platform - as a modern information and communication platform (with a wide involvement of the potential of modern digital, information and communication technologies), which allows to ensure unhindered interaction between the parties to the social dialogue under quarantine restrictions, to improve the work of joint representative bodies, involve other socio-economic actors, stakeholders and partners in the processes of strategic and tactical response to challenges and threats, with the aim of implementation of a coordinated anti-pandemic socio-economic policy to ensure the stability of the national labour market.

The substantive structure (model) of the SRP platform consists of three key elements (Fig. 1).

Element 1 – conceptual, legal, scientific, informational, organisational, managerial, financial support for the creation and functioning of the SRP platform.

Element 2 – shaping a multi-actor information and communication environment (based on the SRP platform), implementation of procedures for effective communication of SLR actors when developing agreed solutions by the participants of the platform.

Element 3 – creation of an integrated network infrastructure, on the basis of which the organisation of real multisubject communication and interaction of subjects of SLR in the online mode is provided (technological aspect of the SRP platform).

It should be noted that elements mentioned above are not successive stages, but structural components of the SRP platform, the formation and improvement of which should take place simultaneously.

³ It should be noted that in this research, the meaning of social responsibility is much broader than corporate social responsibility; namely, as a fundamental basic principle of organisation of public life, which has many manifestations in the attitude of “everyone to everyone”, first of all - the key actors of social development (state, business, civil society).

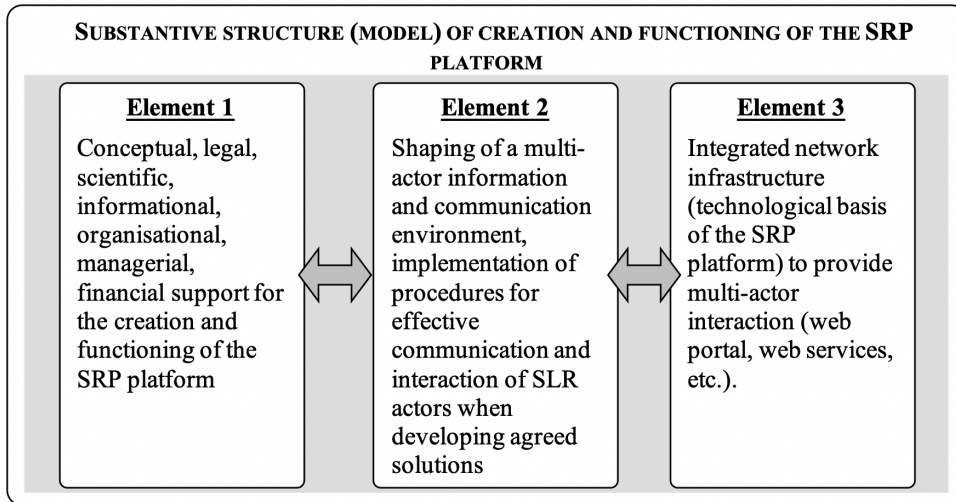


Figure 1: Substantive structure (model) of the platform of socially responsible partnership (SRP platform)

Source: Developed by O. Kasperovich

Important starting conditions for the implementation of the SRP platform at all levels include providing an appropriate regulatory and legal, organisational and managerial, technological (including digital, information and communication), institutional, infrastructural, staffing support. The SRP platform will contribute to the rationalisation of budget expenditures (while increasing the social responsibility of society), as well as reducing the burden of social spending on the budget (by attracting private investment, the transition to targeted support for the needy). The introduction of the SRP platform in Ukraine will also help strengthen public participation and move from a paternalistic position to an effective partnership and effective dialogue between the state, business and the public sector.

The introduction of the SRP platform as a basis for updating the existing system of social dialogue in the face of the newest risks and threats, according to the authors, will ensure:

- formation of a significantly new, platform model of information and communication between the participants of the social dialogue;
- development and implementation of effective communication strategies with wide use of digital and information technologies, media, platforms, social networks, internet communications;
- positive social self-organisation of participants in social-labour relations, wide involvement of civil society institutions (organisations of employers, trade unions, small and medium business, public organisations of scientists, educators, etc.);
- expansion of the resource base for the formation and implementation of effective socio-economic and anti-pandemic policy;
- expansion of the range of social dialogue participants that can reduce the risks and threats of the COVID-19 pandemic in order to stabilise the situation in the labour market;
- updating the tools and mechanisms of system of collective labour agreements (collective bargaining) at the all levels of its implementation
- creation of stable, transparent and effective mechanisms of conciliation, moderation and arbitration, expansion of forms, ways and opportunities to prevent the emergence and resolution of collective labour disputes and conflicts;
- introducing effective mechanisms for interaction between SLR actors to respond urgently to situations that may arise in branches of economy or enterprises (including risks and threats connected with the COVID-19 pandemic).

A combination of the ILO’s four-pillar policy framework and opportunities to ensure the sustainable functioning of the labour market under conditions of forced digitalisation and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic allows to define priority areas of involving the potential of social dialogue to overcome the risks and threats of the COVID-19 pandemic (Table 2). The implementation of the SRP Platform will facilitate their realisation.

Table 2: Priority areas for involving the potential of social dialogue in order to ensure the sustainability of labour markets (in the context of digitalisation and the COVID-19 pandemic)

<p>PILLAR 1 Stimulating the economy and employment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - making a joint vision for the future, forming mechanisms for the implementation of the risk-recovery model of economic, social and labour development with the participation of all actors of the social dialogue; - adoption of agreed decisions on the formation and implementation of state anti-pandemic socio-economic policy; - elaboration of joint agreements by the participants of the social dialogue on the spread of flexible and non-standard forms of employment - harmonisation of the legal base of Ukraine with the international norms, which regulate the relations between the main SLR actors on the basis of security (national, social, economic, social, industrial, etc.), responsibility, partnership to counter the risks and threats of the COVID-19 pandemic; - strengthening the role of the state as a guarantor for achieving socio-economic stability and balancing the interests of the state, employers and employees during the COVID-19 pandemic; - ensuring the modernisation of the system of state regulation of the national labour market on the basis of social responsibility; - strengthening the role of the state, employers, trade unions in protecting the social and labour rights of workers and ensuring the safety of their lives and health under the COVID-19 pandemic; - definition of powers and responsibilities of central, regional executive bodies for the implementation of state anti-pandemic policy and ensuring the stability of the national labour market.
<p>PILLAR 2 Supporting businesses, jobs and incomes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - making agreed decisions on the creation of mechanisms to ensure safe jobs, innovative mechanisms for organising the labour process, the transition to remote work; - development and implementation of an occupational health and safety policy coordinated by the participants of social dialogue, introduction of technologies of remote diagnostics and treatment; - improvement of social protection systems and provision of social guarantees to workers at the production (local), sectoral levels in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic; - development and implementation of programs of social, economic, epidemiological protection of employees on the basis of decisions agreed by the participants of the social dialogue on the national, sectoral, territorial levels of government; - development and implementation of mechanisms to strengthen the responsibility of state and regional executive bodies for the growth of sanitary-epidemiological, social, economic, public dangers in the context of the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic; - ensuring coordinated interaction between state authorities and local self-government, definition of clear criteria for the division of powers between local governments and executive authorities concerning business support, prevention and overcoming of risks and dangers for the labour market under the influence of the COVID-19 pandemic - strengthening public policy aimed at consolidating the efforts of the state, employers, local communities and individuals to finance health care services during the COVID-19 pandemic.

<p>PILLAR 3 Protecting workers in the workplace</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - joint initiation (by the participants of social dialogue) of information campaigns for the formation and development of online security policy; - creation of a system of communication social and communication interaction between medical institutions (doctors) and enterprises to meet the needs of providing medical services in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic; - creation of a national preventive risk-oriented system of occupational safety, which provides control of risks to the life and health of workers, taking into account the specifics of the COVID-19 pandemic; - prevention of simultaneous exposure to epidemiological, industrial, domestic, environmental, psychological risks and ensuring the reduction of their negative impact; - creation of conditions for citizens for full protection and safety of life and health (at the workplace, in public life - in transport, in hospitals, supermarkets, etc.); - introduction of targeted responsibility of state and regional executive and legislative bodies for non-response to risks and dangers caused by the COVID-19 pandemic; - spreading and promotion of standards of responsibility, psychological resilience and security, optimism, integrity, philanthropy in the media under severe quarantine restrictions due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.
<p>PILLAR 4 Relying on social dialogue for solutions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - implementation of a renewed multi-actor system of social dialogue (SRP platform) on the national level; - providing opportunities for cooperation between civil society and government on the basis of trust, social partnership, joint social responsibility in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic; - providing opportunities for constructive social dialogue between the SLR actors at the national, sectoral, territorial, enterprise levels using tools and resources of digitalisation; - strengthening public control over decision-making by executive authorities and local governments on the implementation of measures aimed at minimising risks and dangers on the labour market in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic; - implementation of the best world experience aimed at improving the mechanisms of social dialogue between the participants the SLR actors.

Source: Developed by O. Pankova

The conceptual basis of the SRP platform is consistent with the new paradigm of social dialogue in Ukraine in the context of the implementation of the provisions of the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement on the basis of interaction between the social partners and representatives of the third sector in the format of “Social Dialogue +” in order to balance the economic, social and environmental interests of Ukrainian society (ILO Technical Cooperation Project, 2017). The SRP platform also meets the basic criteria of the Decent Work Concept, which is comprehensive and aims to ensure a high quality of working life, including the protection of the rights and balancing the interests of employees, employers, the state and society, and regulates the range of interests of each of the SLR actors. This is especially valuable in face of the risks and threats of the COVID-19 pandemic and quarantine restrictions.

Social dialogue should become the basis, an effective and integral part of the political system of Ukrainian society in order to get Ukraine out of the current crisis with the least losses for the people, the economy and the state, and implementing the SRP platform could benefit a lot in the social dialogue renewal. The activities of the SLR actors, stakeholders of socio-economic development should be based on the principles of strong social dialogue, balancing the social interests of partners,

social trust and responsibility for the results and effectiveness of decisions on countering the risks and threats of the COVID-19 pandemic and further post-pandemic recovery.

Conclusions

The implementation of the ILO's principle of "building back better" is focused on 4 main components ("pillars"): 1) stimulating the economy and employment; 2) supporting enterprises, jobs and incomes; 3) protecting workers in the workplace and 4) relying on social dialogue for solutions. The ILO has recommended these priorities for national governments as a basic framework for implementing resource mobilisation policies for tackling the socio-economic impact of the COVID-19 crisis, including its impact on global and national labour markets. Accordingly, the key task today is to integrate efforts and resources to ensure the sustainability of global and national economies through the implementation of these 4 priorities.

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the economy and labour market in Ukraine follows a standard scenario, which is typical for other post-Soviet countries. The ILO's four-pillar policy framework has been further concretised in accordance with the prospects of its application in Ukraine, namely:

1. definition and substantiation of the main areas for ensuring the sustainability of the national labour market under the COVID-19 pandemic, on the basis of involving the potential of digitalisation in accordance with each of the ILO's "pillars", defined to restore the economy and ensure the sustainability of national labour markets. Moreover, these areas are universal and can be used in shaping anti-pandemic policies not only in Ukraine but also in other post-Soviet countries (with some adaptation to the specifics of a particular country);
2. substantiation of measures that should be implemented in Ukraine in accordance with the ILO recommendations on 4th pillar "Relying on social dialogue for solutions."

With the growing number and spread of new forms of employment, caused by the rapid development of digitalisation and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the systems of regulation of social and labour relations, social dialogue and social protection need fundamental and systemic renewal. Such renewal is possible under the condition of reorientation on introduction of social innovations with wide use of modern digital, information and communication technologies.

One of the key areas for involving the potential of digitalisation to restore the sustainable functioning of the national labour market should be the development of platform ideology, which could be embodied in specific forms, mechanisms, tools, multi-actor platforms – both in the field of economic activity (including the labour market), and more broadly at the level of public relations. Technological innovation and digitalisation have already laid the foundation for the creation and operation of digital platforms, new business models and socio-behavioural transformations reflect the development of these processes. The COVID-19 crisis has actualised the social demand for these innovations.

An integrated approach to a comprehensive and systematic renewal of the social dialogue system in Ukraine (as in other post-Soviet countries) could be the innovative Platform of Socially Responsible Partnership (SRP platform), proposed by the authors. The substantive structure (model) of the SRP platform includes:

1. technological platform (web portal and other web services) as an integrated network infrastructure that provides the basis for the organisation of multi-actor online interaction;
2. multi-actor information and communication environment, which is formed through the involvement of the maximum number of participants of the social dialogue (government agencies, employers, trade unions, civil society institutions and other SLR actors);
3. conceptual, legal, scientific, methodical, information, communication, organisational, managerial, staffing support needed for creation and functioning of SRP platform.

Authors substantiate that the SRP platform can become an innovative basis for bringing the social dialogue system in Ukraine to a significantly new level, adequate to the severity and scale of the newest challenges, and could facilitate shaping effective anti-pandemic public policy based on compliance with international labour standards.

The idea, the principle of structural construction and the general mechanism of implementation of the SRP platform are universal and can be adapted to update the systems of social dialogue in other post-Soviet countries, where the system of tripartism operates.

Authors' considerations concerning the development and substantiation of the SRP platform as a social innovation, the implementation of which can help to update significantly the existing system of social dialogue in Ukraine, could be considered as a certain comprehension of the features of the new socio-economic reality caused by the rapid digitalisation and the COVID-19 pandemic. This is a certain argument that a reasonable digitalisation of the economy and society can provide reliable protection against global and national risks and threats and promote the sustainability of global and national labour markets and post-pandemic recovery.

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