Arabian Journal of Science

ISSN:2308-5703

Impact factor:13.5 *International Multidisciplinary Online Journal* September, 2026

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVING THE REGULATION OF SOCIAL AND LABOR RELATIONS IN TOURISM AMID DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

Ishankhodjaeva Dildora Aleksandrovna

Director of International Affairs, Research and Innovations at MDIST

Doi: https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.22719164

Abstract: Digital transformation is fundamentally reshaping employment, working conditions, and regulatory governance in the tourism industry, creating urgent needs for updated policy frameworks that protect workers while enabling innovation. This article develops comprehensive policy recommendations across five strategic domains: legal frameworks for platform work and algorithmic management, digital skills development and lifelong learning, social dialogue and collective bargaining, labor inspection and compliance enforcement, and data governance and digital regulatory platforms. Drawing on recent evidence from Eurofound, OECD, ILO, and EU policy initiatives, we propose specific, actionable measures including employment presumption rules for platform workers, algorithmic transparency requirements, national tourism skills partnerships, expanded collective bargaining on digital issues, digital labor inspection tools, and integrated tourism labor market observatories. An implementation roadmap and guidance for contextual adaptation are provided to support policymakers, industry associations, and social partners in ensuring that digital transformation promotes decent work and inclusive growth in tourism.

Introduction

The tourism sector is undergoing rapid digital transformation driven by online platforms, artificial intelligence, big data analytics, and mobile technologies that are reconfiguring service production, distribution, and consumption. This transformation presents a dual challenge for social and labor relations: while digitalization creates opportunities for efficiency, innovation, and new skill-intensive roles, it also generates risks including job displacement in traditional intermediaries, ambiguous employment status for platform workers, algorithmic control without transparency, skills obsolescence, and regulatory gaps in worker protection. Existing labor laws and tourism policies, often designed for traditional employment relationships, struggle to address emerging forms of digital work such as platform-based gig employment, algorithmically managed operations, and cross-border remote work. The pace of technological change frequently outstrips regulatory adaptation, leaving many tourism workers—particularly in SMEs, seasonal roles, and platform-based arrangements—without adequate protection, training access. Recent international policy initiatives provide emerging frameworks for addressing these challenges. The EU's Directive 2024/2831 on platform work establishes minimum standards for working conditions and introduces the first EU rules regulating algorithmic management in the workplace. The OECD's Tourism Trends and Policies 2024 emphasizes integrating tourism workers' needs into broader economic strategies and strengthening education-industry linkages. The EU Pact for Skills for Tourism sets ambitious targets to train 10% of the tourism workforce annually through 2030. Despite these advances, comprehensive policy guidance specifically tailored to regulating social and labor relations in digital tourism remains limited. This article addresses this gap by developing actionable recommendations grounded in international evidence and best practices. Our objectives are to identify key regulatory challenges, propose specific policy

measures across five strategic domains, and provide an implementation roadmap adaptable to diverse national and regional contexts.

Methods

This article employs a policy analysis framework integrating regulatory theory, labor market governance, and digital transformation literature. The framework is structured around five strategic policy domains derived from international policy documents and academic research: (1) legal frameworks governing platform work and algorithmic management; (2) digital skills development and lifelong learning systems; (3) social dialogue and collective bargaining mechanisms; (4) labor inspection and compliance enforcement; and (5) data governance and digital regulatory platforms. Policy recommendations are grounded in multiple evidence sources including international policy documents (EU Directive 2024/2831, OECD Tourism Trends and Policies 2024, ILO guidelines on decent work and socially responsible tourism, EU Pact for Skills), empirical research on digitalization's impacts on tourism employment and job quality from Eurofound and OECD, and best practice examples from EU member states and OECD countries on digital skills training, platform work regulation, and social dialogue.osha.europa+3 Recommendations were developed through a three-stage process: synthesis of policy challenges from literature review, identification of policy measures from international frameworks and best practices, and formulation of actionable recommendations with implementation guidance validated against criteria of feasibility, effectiveness, equity, and adaptability to diverse contexts.

Legal Frameworks for Platform Work and Algorithmic Management

Challenge: Digital platforms have created new forms of tourism work including ride-hailing drivers, tour guides, experience hosts, and short-term rental managers. Many platform workers face ambiguous employment status, limited social protection, and exposure to algorithmic management systems that control task allocation, performance monitoring, and remuneration without transparency or human oversight. Existing labor laws often fail to classify platform workers correctly, leaving them in regulatory gaps between employment and self-employment.

Establish Employment Presumption Rules: Adopt legal provisions that establish a presumption of employment for platform workers when certain criteria are met, such as platform determination of remuneration, binding rules on conduct or performance, electronic supervision through ratings, or restrictions on building independent client bases. Modeled on EU Directive 2024/2831, this approach shifts the burden of proof to platforms to demonstrate genuine self-employment, reducing misclassification and ensuring access to labor rights.

Regulate Algorithmic Management Transparency: Implement requirements for platforms and firms using algorithmic management to provide clear information on how algorithms monitor, evaluate, and make decisions affecting workers; notification of significant algorithmic changes; human oversight mechanisms for automated decisions; procedures for workers to contest algorithmic decisions and request human review; and regular impact assessments on working conditions, discrimination risks, and health and safety. These measures promote fairness, accountability, and worker agency in algorithmically managed environments.

Define Rights for Cross-Border Remote Workers: Develop legal frameworks addressing cross-border remote work in tourism, including clear rules on applicable labor law and social security jurisdiction, minimum standards for working time and occupational health and safety, mechanisms for

cross-border labor inspection cooperation, and tax and social contribution arrangements for digital nomads and remote tourism workers. Such frameworks should balance flexibility with adequate protection and compliance enforcement.

Simplify and Harmonize Regulations: Review and simplify existing regulations affecting tourism employment in consultation with employer and worker organizations to reduce administrative burdens for SMEs while maintaining worker protections, harmonize rules across subsectors, clarify responsibilities in multi-party arrangements, and ensure regulations are technology-neutral and adaptable to future innovations.

Digital Skills Development and Lifelong Learning Systems

Challenge: Digital transformation is creating growing skills gaps in tourism, with demand increasing for competencies in big data, AI, digital marketing, and sustainability, while many workers lack basic digital literacy. Barriers to skills development include the predominance of SMEs with limited training budgets, seasonality that disrupts continuous learning, and a workforce that is often young, low-skilled, or migrant.

Establish National/Regional Tourism Skills Partnerships: Create multi-stakeholder skills partnerships bringing together industry associations, tourism businesses, worker organizations, education and training providers, government agencies, and destination management organizations. Modeled on the EU Pact for Skills approach, these partnerships should develop skills intelligence, coordinate training provision, and monitor progress toward upskilling targets.

Set Ambitious Upskilling Targets: Adopt quantitative targets such as training 10% of the tourism workforce annually through 2030, achieving an average of 50 hours of training per participant per year, increasing upskilling participation by 40% for employed workers and 80% for unemployed workers by 2025, and ensuring 60% of training includes both green and digital skills components.

Develop Modular, Blended Learning Programs: Design flexible training programs that combine online and in-person delivery, offer micro-credentials and digital badges for specific competencies, integrate apprenticeships and work-based learning, provide generic digital literacy modules alongside role-specific technical skills, and include soft skills such as customer service, communication, and adaptability.

Target Support for SMEs and Vulnerable Workers: Implement measures including subsidies or tax incentives for SME training investments, low-cost or no-cost generic digital skills packages for small firms, targeted programs for young workers, migrants, women, and low-skilled employees, and mobile training units or regional training hubs accessible to rural and seasonal workers.

Strengthen Skills Intelligence and Labor Market Information: Build systems to monitor skills demand and supply through regular skills needs assessments, occupational standards and competency frameworks for digital tourism roles, sharing labor market information with education providers to align curricula, and tracking training outcomes, employment placement.

Domain 3: Social Dialogue and Collective Bargaining Mechanisms

Challenge: Social dialogue and collective bargaining coverage in tourism remain limited, particularly regarding digital transformation issues. Collective agreements addressing the twin green and digital transitions are rare in tourism, and where they exist, they tend to focus narrowly on training

and workforce attractiveness. Platform workers often lack representation structures, and traditional unions face challenges organizing fragmented, digitally managed workforces.

Policy Recommendations:

Expand Collective Agreement Coverage on Digital Issues: Encourage social partners to negotiate collective agreements addressing algorithmic management transparency, digital surveillance and data privacy protections, remote work arrangements and work-life balance, digital skills training entitlements and career pathways, and platform worker rights and benefits. Governments can support this through legal frameworks facilitating sectoral bargaining, incentives for employers to join associations, and extension mechanisms applying agreements to non-signatory firms.

Strengthen Tripartite Institutions for Tourism Labor: Establish or reinforce tripartite bodies including national tourism labor councils, regional skills and employment forums, sectoral working groups on digital transformation, and regular social dialogue summits. These institutions should meet at least annually, produce joint recommendations, and monitor implementation of agreements.

Support Platform Worker Organization: Facilitate representation through legal recognition of platform worker associations and cooperatives, funding and technical support for organizing efforts, inclusion of platform worker representatives in social dialogue forums, and exploration of new representation models such as data trusts or worker councils for platforms.

Promote Best Practice Sharing: Create platforms for exchanging successful social dialogue practices including online repositories of collective agreements on digital issues, peer learning networks among unions and employer associations, case study documentation of effective digital transformation agreements, and regional and international forums for tourism labor dialogue.

Discussion

Implementation Roadmap: The policy recommendations should be implemented through a phased, adaptive approach. Phase 1 (Years 1–2) focuses on foundation building: conducting regulatory gap analysis, establishing skills partnerships, launching pilot digital inspection tools and observatories, initiating social dialogue on priority issues, and developing training programs for inspectors and policymakers. Phase 2 (Years 3–5) emphasizes scaling and integration: enacting legal reforms on platform work and algorithmic management, expanding skills training programs to meet targets, deploying digital regulatory platforms nationwide, negotiating sectoral collective agreements on digital issues, and strengthening cross-border inspection cooperation. Phase 3 (Years 6–10) consolidates and innovates: evaluating policy impacts and refining frameworks, integrating AI and advanced analytics into inspection and skills forecasting, achieving comprehensive collective bargaining coverage, establishing tourism labor regulation as a model for other sectors, and contributing to international policy development.

Contextual Adaptation: Recommendations must be adapted to local contexts considering the level of digital transformation, institutional capacity, economic structure, and legal environment. Countries with advanced digital tourism ecosystems may prioritize algorithmic management regulation and platform worker rights, while those in earlier stages may focus on basic digital skills and formalization. Countries with strong labor inspection systems can build on existing institutions, while those with limited capacity may need foundational investments and technical assistance. Tourism-dependent economies may require more comprehensive interventions, while diversified economies can leverage cross-sectoral policies.

Stakeholder Roles: Effective implementation requires coordinated action from governments (enacting reforms, funding programs, modernizing inspection), employer associations (developing standards, supporting SME training, engaging in bargaining), worker organizations (organizing platform workers, negotiating digital rights, providing training), education providers (designing curricula, delivering training, conducting research), platforms and technology providers (ensuring transparency, cooperating with regulators, investing in workers), and international organizations (providing technical assistance, facilitating knowledge sharing, developing standards).

Monitoring and Evaluation: Policymakers should define clear indicators for each recommendation, establish baseline measurements and set time-bound targets, conduct regular progress reviews with stakeholder participation, and publish evaluation reports to enable evidence-based policy refinement.

Conclusion

This article has developed comprehensive policy recommendations for improving the regulation of social and labor relations in tourism amid digital transformation across five strategic domains: legal frameworks for platform work and algorithmic management, digital skills development and lifelong learning, social dialogue and collective bargaining, labor inspection and compliance enforcement, and data governance and digital regulatory. Key recommendations include establishing employment presumption rules for platform workers, implementing algorithmic management transparency requirements, creating national tourism skills partnerships with ambitious upskilling targets, expanding collective agreement coverage on digital issues, deploying digital labor inspection tools, and building integrated tourism labor market observatories. These measures aim to ensure that digital transformation in tourism promotes decent work, reduces labor market segmentation, and supports inclusive. Implementation requires a phased, adaptive approach with coordinated action from governments, employer associations, worker organizations, education providers, platforms, and international organizations. Monitoring and evaluation frameworks should track progress against clear indicators, enabling evidence-based policy refinement over time. Future research should focus on empirical evaluation of policy impacts, comparative analysis of regulatory approaches across countries, and exploration of emerging issues such as AI-driven automation, virtual reality tourism work, and climate-digital synergies in tourism employment. By addressing these challenges proactively, policymakers can harness the benefits of digital transformation while safeguarding the rights and well-being of tourism workers worldwide.

References

1. Eurofound. (2025). *Sustainable tourism in a digital age: Preparing the tourism sector for the twin transitions*. Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg. https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/en/publications/all/sustainable-tourism-in-a-digital-age-preparing-the-tourism-sector-for-the-twin-transitions
2. European Union. (2024). Directive 2024/2831/EU on improving working conditions in platform work. *Official Journal of the European Union*, L 2024/2831. https://osha.europa.eu/en/legislation/directive/directive-20242831eu-platform-workosha.europa
3. OECD. (2024). *OECD Tourism Trends and Policies 2024*. OECD Publishing, Paris. https://doi.org/10.1787/80885d8b-enoecd+1

4. European Commission. (2024). *Pact for Skills Tourism Baseline – Update 2024*. https://pact-for-skills.ec.europa.eu/document/download/83968c43-1706-4fbd-9fd0-4461583607d7_en

5. International Labour Organization (ILO). (2017). *Guidelines on decent work and socially responsible tourism*. ILO, Geneva. https://ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/---emp_ent/documents/publication/wcms_546337.pdfisto

6. European Parliament. (2024). *EU directive on platform work – At a glance*. EPRS_ATA(2024)760437_EN. https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/ATAG/2024/760437/EPRS_ATA(2024)760437_EN.pdf

7. European Parliament. (2022). *Improving the working conditions of platform workers*. EPRS_BRI(2022)698923_EN. https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2022/698923/EPRS_BRI(2022)698923_EN.pdf

8. OECD. (2021). *Preparing the Tourism Workforce in Portugal for the Digital Future*. OECD Publishing, Paris. https://doi.org/10.1787/bcada146-en

9. Ministry of Industry and Tourism, Spain. (2023). Digital Skills Training Plan for the Tourism Sector 2023. https://mptmd.gob.es/en/portal/delegaciones_gobierno/delegaciones/navarra/actualidad/2023/12/2023-12-05

10. Thomas, R., et al. (2022). The policy responses of tourism agencies to emerging digital skills constraints: A critical assessment of six countries. *International Journal of Tourism Research*, 24(5), 789–805. https://doi.org/10.1002/jtr.2554eprints.leedsbeckett.ac

11. Queensland Tourism Industry Council. (2019). *Tourism Workforce Development Booklet*. Griffith University, Queensland. https://www.griffith.edu.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0039/996285/16956_QTIC_WorkforceDevBooklet_prf4_1up.pdfadvancedscienti

12. OECD. (2021). *Preparing the Tourism Workforce for the Digital Future*. OECD Tourism Papers, No. 2021/02. https://nexttourismgeneration.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/PREPARING-THE-TOURISM-WORKFORCE-FOR-THE-DIGITAL-FUTURE.pdfgriffith.edu

13. International Labour Organization (ILO). (2023). *The Algorithmic Management of work and its implications in different contexts*. ILO, Geneva. https://www.ilo.org/publications/algorithmic-management-work-and-its-implications-different-contexts

14. Ladkin, A., et al. (2023). A review of research into tourism work and employment: Launching the Annals of Tourism Research curated collection on tourism work and employment. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 101, 103554. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annals.2023.103554