

The EU Social Contract and Digitisation: Theory, Disruption, and Future Perspectives

Co-creation Workshop

26 September 2025

Organising Committee: [Dr Giulia Gentile](#) (Co-Principal Investigator, EXPRESS2 Work Package on Digitisation) and [Nicolae Radulescu](#) (Research Officer, EXPRESS2 Work Package on Digitisation).

Background and objectives

The rise of digitisation has transformed the relationships among individuals, corporations, and public bodies within European society. Public and private infrastructures, as well as the exercise of power in the EU's legal space, have been reconfigured due to digitisation. Consider, for instance, the ability of online platforms to influence European politics through the spread of information, the heightened vulnerability of individuals vis-à-vis automated decision-making, and, more recently, the geopolitics of digital regulation. As a result, fundamental dynamics, objectives, and actors of the EU Social Contract were renegotiated and reshaped, and novel societal and regulatory challenges have emerged for EU institutions.

The EXPRESS2 Work Package on Digitisation, led by Dr Giulia Gentile (University of Essex), explores the intersection between the EU Social Contract and digitisation. The questions addressed in the Work Package are:

- How has digitisation impacted the EU Social Contract?
- Is the EU institutional response to the rise of digitisation fully aligned with the goals and values of the EU Social Contract?
- How can the EU Social Contract be made more resilient through and against digitisation?

Building on the analysis of EU digital policies and institutional measures, surveys, and stakeholders' engagement, the Digitisation Work Package will produce two reports and a set of policy recommendations to rethink the EU Social Contract for the digital age.

The Digitisation Work Package will organise **an online Co-creation Workshop on 26 September 2025**. The objectives of the workshop are:

- Presenting and discussing the preliminary findings of the Digitisation Work Package;

- Facilitating engagement of stakeholders on issues concerning the EU Social Contract and Digitisation;
- Receiving input and feedback from interested communities and experts.

Programme

N.B. All the time slots are in BST

10:00 am **Welcome and Introduction**, Giulia Gentile (Assistant Professor of Law, University of Essex)

Message from MEP Brando Benifei

1st Panel

10:15 am – 10:35 am **Perspectives on the EU Social Contract**

Speakers:

- David Axelsen (Senior Lecturer in Department of Government, University of Essex)
- Dharmendra Kanani (Chief Operating Officer & Chief Spokesperson, Friends of Europe)

Chair:

Antoni Abat i Ninet (Distinguished Researcher at the Institut d'Estudis Europeus, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona)

10:35 am – 11:20 am **Open discussion**

11:20 am – 11:30 am **Break**

2nd Panel

11:30 am – 11:50 am **Digitisation and the EU Social Contract**

Speakers:

- Lisa Smith (Senior Lecturer in Digital History, University of Essex)
- Eleonora Peruffo (Research Officer in Social Policies Unit, Eurofound)

Chair:

Giulia Gentile (Assistant Professor of Law, University of Essex)

11:50 am – 12:35 pm **Open discussion**

12:35 pm – 1:15 pm **Lunch Break**

3rd Panel

1:15 pm – 1:35 pm **EU Digital Regulation, the EU Social Contract and the Alignment Challenge**

Speakers:

- Ella Jakubowska (Head of Policy, European Digital Rights)
- Karine Caunes (Executive Director, Digihumanism)
- Vagelis Papakonstantinou (Professor of Law, VUB)

Chair:

Zeynep Gülrü Göker (Associate Professor of Political Science, Sabanci University)

1:35 pm – 2:15 pm **Open Discussion**

2:15 pm – 2:30 pm **Break**

4th Panel

2:30 pm – 2:50 pm **EXPRESS2 Work Package on Digitisation and the EU Social Contract: Preliminary Findings and the Way Forward**

Speakers:

- Giulia Gentile (Assistant Professor of Law, University of Essex)
- Nicolae Radulescu (PhD Candidate, University of Essex)

2:50 pm – 3:50 pm **Open Discussion and Consultation**

3:50 pm – 4:00 pm **Concluding Remarks**

Join [Here](#).