



European Economic
and Social Committee



CNEL – EESC EVENT ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS

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INTRODUCTION

The document gathers contributions from the speakers of the two panels of the CNEL – CESE event dedicated to Artificial Intelligence and Industrial Relations, which took place at Villa Lubin - CNEL, on January 24, 2025.

The contributions, presented in abstract form and with references to additional resources or materials indicated by the speakers, were originally produced in both Italian and English, depending on the speaker's country of origin.

In cases where the contribution was in Italian, an English translation has been provided as a courtesy in this document.

We thank the speakers for their valuable collaboration and contribution to the success of the initiative.

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ABSTRACT DISCUSSIONS – 1° PANEL

AI MADE IN EUROPE – POSSIBLE BUT NEEDS WORK

Sandra Parthie – President of EESC's Section on Single Market, Production and Consumption (INT) and Rapporteur of INT/1055 opinion on “General-purpose AI: way forward after the AI Act

To be competitive in general-purpose AI (GPAI), Europe must invest in secure connectivity and resilient backbone infrastructure as well as a resilient supply chain to ensure that the effects of generative AI can be harnessed for European actors and aligned with European values and needs.

The EESC emphasises that AI is a very dynamic subject and that the AI Act will have to be updated in a similarly flexible and dynamic way to achieve its objective of creating an ecosystem that is trustworthy and respects EU fundamental rights and values. Even though GPAI models are highly technical and predominantly relevant in the business-to-business (B2B) context, they have an indirect impact on workers and consumers. To dispel fears and enhance awareness, the EESC advises organising dialogues with stakeholders, including social partners, about the codes of practice in workplaces and workers' rights in the context of GPAI.

To combat a market concentration dominated by large, often non-European, digital companies, the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) believes it is essential to mobilise the tools of competition policy (assessing the potential abuse of a company's dominant position, merger control) to prevent, identify and address critical behaviour and situations. Coordinated European and national investment in innovation is needed to help develop EU value chains and value creation in AI.

The planned voluntary codes of practice with respect to the AI Act will make it easier for companies to comply with the regulations. The EESC expects it to provide users, developers and other AI stakeholders with guidelines, best practices for applying the regulation, templates, information on thresholds and standards, and easy-to-use checklists.

The AI Office will play a crucial role in implementing and enforcing the AI Act's provisions, including providing guidance, establishing codes of conduct, promoting international cooperation in AI, promoting European standards and enforcing EU regulations vis-à-vis European and non-European companies active in the EU. The AI Office and national authorities must have the necessary resources to monitor, evaluate and enforce the provisions of the law, ensuring compliance and consumer rights protection.

The EESC is conscious of the concerns that various categories of content creators currently have about the use of generative AI. It is of utmost importance to ensure that AI is developed in a way that respects patentability, copyright and intellectual property rules.

AI can increase energy and resource efficiency by improving processes and providing solutions that allow for virtual tests, digital twins and other options for reducing the use of materials. AI systems

and models and their development also have an impact on the environment and energy usage, which must be accurately measured and considered.

LINK

[General-purpose AI: way forward after the AI Act | EESC](#)

AI IN THE WORLD OF WORK

Franca Salis Madinier, Vice President of the EESC's Section on Employment, Social Affairs and Citizenship

An opinion fueled by prospective work with the European Commission

With 40 experts coming from all over Europe: representatives of companies, workers from the academic world, NGOs and European and international institutions. The work was organized in two workshops

The ideal scenario on AI at Horizon 2035

Europe has promoted a legislative effort to prevent risks at work and to guarantee human control and transparency. These are the conditions for creating trust and social acceptance of this technology.

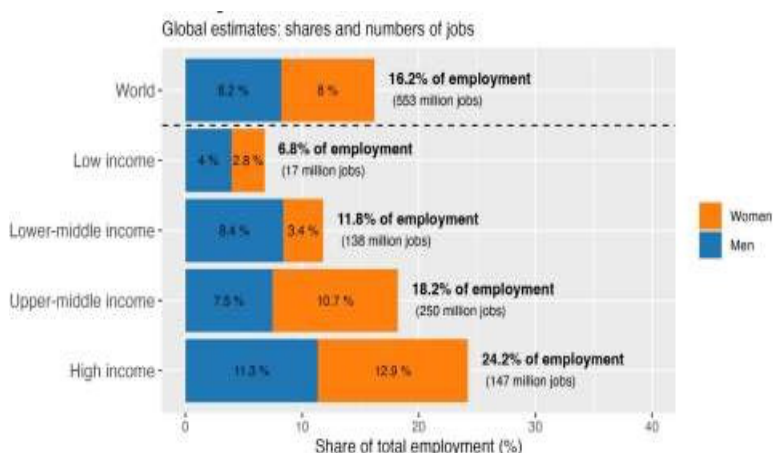
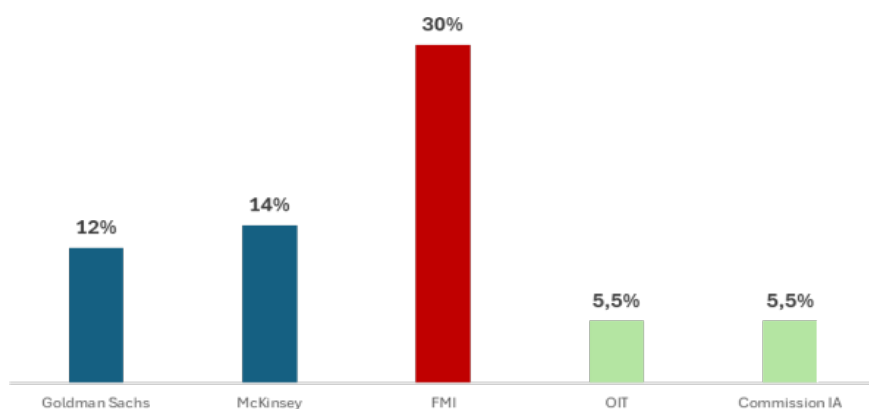
A robust social dialogue involving worker representatives at every stage of the use of AI tools is the ideal tool to reduce risks and exploit the potential for the benefit of all workers.

Impacts on work: quality and working conditions

😊 Reducing time-consuming tasks: managing too many emails. Taking meeting minutes, matching career and training paths. Drafting job sheets, analyzing and synthesizing a huge amount of data and documents. Create images, video content, podcasts, graphic logos for marketing campaigns. Productivity gained.

😞 Survey carried out in 2024 on 6300 employees in three countries in various professional sectors: Use of wristbands to measure performance, assignment of work shifts, impact on mental health of control at work, loss of autonomy: execution of tasks assigned by AI in limited time and following specific instructions that do not take into account the real activity.

Impacts on work: will AI replace me?



Impacts on work: employment

- The effects on use depend on the purpose of its introduction. Improve the service to the user, the citizen, the customer or automate to reduce costs?
- Worker training is an important variable. Some professions are more affected than others.
- Vulnerable groups: women, seniors and less educated workers because they do not have access to AI jobs or the training to work with it.
- The presence of trade unions and collectively organized workers reduces "wild" automation. More serious effects on employment in countries where there is no union.

Effectiveness of legislation regarding this technology

- National legislation initiatives and fragmentations in Europe between member countries

The recommendations of our opinion:

- Rapid and general training of workers

- Sensitiveness to AI and training of all citizens and young people.
- Strengthening social dialogue by adapting existing legislation, providing explicit guidance on certain texts, broadening the application of Chapter III of the Platforms Directive to all workers.

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Franca Salis-Madinier « [Le guide de l'intelligence artificielle au travail - Vos droits face aux algorithmes](#) »

DIGITALIZATION AND ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IN THE LABOR MARKET

Giovanni Marcantonio, CESE

Digitalization constitutes a dynamic development system, where opportunities and risks are closely interconnected. It transforms all segments of society and the economy and will therefore have repercussions on work and employment. Digital technology has the potential to increase wealth and improve the quality of work and employment. These opportunities, however, entail some critical issues. On the one hand, the innovative services and business models that digitalization makes possible allow for increases in productivity; on the other, it is necessary to consider the significant repercussions on the labor market and work organization, such as an increase in pay disparities and a reduction in access to social security systems. It is difficult to establish today what employment is possible in qualitative and quantitative terms, given that new technologies trigger the search for new rules for labor markets. The ongoing digitalization of the economy is certainly characterized by the speed with which the transition occurs.

Artificial Intelligence will extend and amplify the effects of the digitalization of the economy on labor markets. It is likely that AI and robotics will lead to the relocation and transformation of jobs, the disappearance of some professions and the emergence of others. The involvement of workers in new technologies concerns in particular the definition of responsibilities, ownership of production processes, the development of knowledge and skills, issues relating to organization and working conditions, health, safety and management. Social dialogue must make it possible to understand the prospects for the transformation of production processes in companies and in the various economic sectors, as well as to evaluate new needs in terms of qualifications and training. It must also allow the use of AI to be regulated in advance to improve organizational and production processes, strengthen workers' qualifications and optimize the resources that AI makes available for the development of new products and services. The transformative potential manifests itself in production processes and has an impact on the content of work, as AI can help workers perform repetitive, strenuous and even dangerous tasks, while in other applications it is possible to improve worker well-being, facilitate communication, sharing of responsibilities, enhancement of decision-making autonomy and even a better work-life balance. In this sense, AI can reduce the demand for some tasks, induce the replacement or transformation of certain employment roles, automate certain activities and improve efficiency in work processes, but it can also create new job opportunities in sectors such as development and maintenance of intelligent systems.

In particular, it is possible to identify some profiles of interaction between AI and work activities:

1. AI can be used to automate repetitive tasks, allowing workers to focus on tasks that require advanced cognitive abilities. Industrial robots can be programmed to perform assembly tasks or physically demanding jobs.
2. AI can provide advanced analytics to support decision making. AI systems can analyze large amounts of data and provide recommendations to workers, who can then make informed decisions by improving the accuracy of the decisions made.

3. AI can optimize manufacturing and logistics operations through intelligent planning, route optimization and inventory management. It may lead to increased efficiency and reduced costs but could also lead to reduced demand for labor in some sectors.

4. AI can pave the way for new work models, such as self-employment or telecommuting. With the automation of tasks and the ability to work remotely, some people may opt for self-employment or work as freelancers.

5. AI requires a workforce with the right skills to interact with technologies and take advantage of the opportunities offered. This implies the need for continuous training and skills development to adapt to new work demands.

It is possible to identify different profiles of AI intervention in the field of human resources management. It can be used in the initial phases of contact with workers through recruitment (competitions, selection, contractual definition and classifications, assignment of tasks, etc.), in the current management of staff for career progression, performance evaluation, access to training and benefits, health-safety and in the exit phases such as dismissals/non-renewal of contracts.

In the case of platform work, AI even intervenes in the definition of salary levels, working hours, promotion, limitation/suspension/account closure and reputation.

In this context, the risks could be the failure to protect worker rights, the production of distorted results due to the "prejudices" of programmers, incorrect data feeding, "discriminating" algorithmic decisions, violation of privacy or illicit processing of data, manipulation of human behavior. Therefore, the right to privacy and the management of sensitive information, the right to information (on the fact that an algorithm is used, functioning of the machine, type of data used), the right to transparency of the decision-making process of choosing the algorithm (decisions made/not made, which impact the professional sphere), right to information on the transferability of worker data (from platform to another, from employer to another).

It is useful to consider that, at least now, there is no AI intelligent enough to be the recipient of any delegation of function. The necessary anthropocentric approach must forcefully affirm that AI cannot replace us nor can it translate into a delegation of responsibility or of an emotional nature, avoiding any phenomenon that determines the heterogenesis of purposes. The best results in decision-making terms will only be obtained through an effective training process of the tool which will be able to systematize a large quantity of data, but which will also have to consider the quality of the latter and the transparency of the processes. Not a competition with the digital tool, but an interaction that creates an integrated working group, which lays the foundations for better effectiveness than that achievable through separate paths.

It is clear that work must not be analyzed only from an employment perspective, as with a regulatory process, it is possible to create conditions to enhance the positive effects of digitalization on people's lives, business activities and limit risks. Only through significant economic and organizational investments will it be possible to balance worker protection with technological innovation, directing actions towards fair and inclusive social and economic growth.

Companies will have to train their workers, because the professional quality of the workforce is a necessary condition to remain competitive in the globalized market. Workers must be willing to accept ongoing training commitments to transition and maintain their skills throughout their working life.

The speed of diffusion and evolution of AI represents a critical element in relation to the labor market as it is difficult for the latter to quickly compensate for the skills that will be eliminated and train new ones to adapt to the new context.

The European Convention on Human Rights, the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU, the Constitutional Charter, possess the necessary elasticity to extend their protection guarantees to new protection needs, if they are interpreted in an evolutionary key.

The implementing provisions will have to lay the foundations for strategic planning of the elements considered, to allow the labor market to enhance digitalization on aspects such as skills and training but also quality of work, digital efficiency of the PA, guarantee of decent work, fight against work black and social dumping, encouraging young people and providing efficient services through a system of active policies and public and private employment services.



ABSTRACT DISCUSSIONS – 2° PANEL

DIGITAL RIGHTS AS COLLECTIVE RIGHTS. THE NEW HILFR2 AGREEMENT ON ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE ENSURES BOTH THE MANAGERIAL PREROGATIVE AND WORKERS' RIGHTS TO UNIONIZE

Anna Ilsøe, FAOS University of Copenhagen

The Danish cleaning platform Hilfr has concluded a new collective agreement (Hilfr2) in collaboration with the United Federation of Danish Workers (3F), introducing a strong emphasis on the socially responsible use of artificial intelligence (AI). This agreement builds on Denmark's well-established collective bargaining model, aiming to balance both managerial prerogative (the employer's right to manage and distribute work) and workers' rights to unionize. It goes beyond EU legislative directives—such as the AI Act (2024) and the Platform Work Directive (2024)—by placing clear responsibility on the employer for all algorithm-based decisions and by creating new collective digital rights.

AI in the Workplace

Debates surrounding AI often address whether it will replace or modify job functions, how it might influence job content, and whether algorithmic management (AM) could undermine personal and collective rights. While AI can raise productivity and improve working conditions, concerns about potential discrimination, privacy breaches, and diminished opportunities for dialogue remain significant. In platform-based work, these issues are intensified by geographical dispersion and minimal direct interaction among workers, making collective organization more difficult.

Background: The Danish Bargaining Model

The Danish labour market is traditionally regulated through collective agreements between employers and employees, grounded in principles established by the 1899 September Compromise. These include the managerial prerogative, the workers' right to unionize, the peace obligation, and the right to conflict. In this context, the new Hilfr2 agreement stands out for embedding AI-related conditions within an established legal and collective bargaining framework.

1. The Hilfr2 Agreement

Hilfr2 follows on from the earlier Hilfr1 (2018) but now stipulates that all cleaners at Hilfr have employee status, eliminating the option to work as self-employed. This enables the agreement to clarify and strengthen employer responsibility for algorithmic decisions. It ensures that such decisions fall under the same collective agreement rules that govern traditional managerial decisions, granting workers the same labour court protection if disputes arise.

2. Employer Responsibilities for AI and Algorithms

Building on the EU's platform directive, Hilfr2 highlights that all decisions—whether made by humans or algorithms—are the employer's legal responsibility. This shift toward output rather than technical input simplifies the use of algorithms for productivity and clarifies employees' collective rights: any

algorithmic decision can be challenged under labour law, requiring employers to disclose the basis and process behind it. The agreement further holds the employer accountable for any procedural obstacles linked to the digital environment that might impair workers' legal recourse.

3. Fairness and Non-Discrimination

Because Hilfr is a profile platform—where workers create personal profiles and customers choose among them—the risk of uneven access to jobs is significant. Positive ratings can lead to greater algorithmic visibility, creating intense competition. Under Hilfr2, the employer must ensure equal treatment and guard against discrimination. This is crucial for nurturing a sense of community among workers, facilitating union organization, and supporting fair outcomes in an otherwise highly competitive environment.

4. Data Collection and Legitimate Purpose

To operate effectively, Hilfr needs certain data about its workers, including digital addresses for communication. The potential for extensive data gathering through digital devices is high, so Hilfr2 imposes strict limits: data collection must be justified by a legitimate managerial purpose, and data must not be accessed via third parties, nor sold or shared (except with Danish tax authorities). This grants workers collective rights to scrutinize and challenge data collection processes in the labour courts.

5. Collective Waiver of Personal Information Rights

Workers often unintentionally waive personal data rights by clicking “yes” to broad terms. To address this, Hilfr2 requires that any collection of personal data be relevant to a specific managerial aim and prohibits individual waivers of personal information rights. Instead, a collective waiver—guided by a structured template in the agreement—allows the employer to operate smoothly while enhancing protection of nonessential worker data.

6. Digital Union Club

Because platform work is dispersed and workers rarely meet, unionization can be challenging. Hilfr2 grants 3F the right to place a digital link on Hilfr's platform, directing workers to a private online space for discussing wages, conditions, and union matters. The employer cannot monitor this space, ensuring that employees can organize, elect employee representatives, and seek advice independently.

7. Implications for the Future

The Hilfr2 agreement illustrates how collective rights can align with and even strengthen managerial needs in a digitally managed workplace. By guaranteeing legal accountability for all algorithmic decisions and providing digital tools for unionization, Hilfr2 may serve as a model for new social compromises in a world of AI-driven management. It has already influenced the EU's platform directive, and it is possible that it will pave the way for broader sector and national negotiations. Its success will depend on how effectively the agreement is implemented in practice—particularly regarding the digital union club and the use of labour courts to challenge algorithmic decisions.



Through Hilfr2, Danish social partners offer a glimpse of how managerial prerogative and the right to unionize can be preserved and adapted in the digital age. The agreement's potential to act as a “digital September Compromise” underscores its significance, illustrating that even a smaller Danish platform can help shape broader labour policies surrounding AI.

INDUSTRIAL POLICIES AND INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS FOR ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE. TOWARDS PARTICIPATORY AI

Ivana Pais, CNEL, Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore

The working group "Industrial Policies for Artificial Intelligence" was established in March 2024 by CNEL's Commission I – Economic Policies and Productive Activities, with two main objectives: to analyze the strategies for adopting AI-related technologies in Italy and their impact on employment; and to develop joint proposals from labor and business representatives within the framework of industrial policies for artificial intelligence.

Despite its pervasiveness, artificial intelligence exhibits varying adoption rates and approaches depending on sector-specific competitive dynamics and regulatory frameworks. For this reason, the Working Group has chosen to conduct sectoral analyses to assess ongoing transformations in relation to the specific characteristics of different industries.

The work began with an analysis of the banking and insurance sector, deemed particularly significant for several reasons: the crucial role of digitalization and data management in this industry; the presence of large companies making substantial investments in technological innovation; the emphasis on accountability processes in a highly regulated sector; a tradition of advanced industrial relations, particularly in the management of sector reorganization; the public utility functions of companies providing essential services; and labor market forecasts indicating that the financial services sector will be among the most affected by potential fluctuations in the coming years, with a growing demand for new skills.

The analysis was conducted through hearings with key industry stakeholders, including companies, business and labor interest groups and their affiliated research centers, regulatory authorities, and other institutions.

The analysis led to the development of the document "Observations and Proposals of the National Council for Economy and Labor on Industrial Policies for Artificial Intelligence: An Analysis of the Banking and Insurance Sectors," which was approved by the CNEL Assembly on October 24, 2024. Despite the specific characteristics of the sector, several issues of broader relevance emerged. The starting point of this reflection is methodological rather than purely content-based. The Working Group's review revealed that even in a sector where AI applications are already well advanced, mechanisms for actively involving workers and customers remain weak.

At the European level, the AI Act does not explicitly mention social partners, except in Recital 150, which refers to the establishment of a consultative forum. However, when specifying the forum's composition, the text emphasizes the need for a balanced selection of stakeholders, including industry, startups, SMEs, civil society, and academia, without explicitly referencing business and labor representation organizations.

The limited attention given to the role of social partners in the AI debate and its practical implementations highlights the urgent need for a reflection on AI governance. Although discussions often emphasize democratization and disintermediation processes driven by AI, real-world implementations tend to concentrate power in the hands of a few.

Even when the slogan of human-centered AI development (humans-in-the-loop) is reiterated, it often refers to a small group of highly skilled individuals tasked with overseeing processes and

preventing machines from taking control. However, it is crucial to recognize that both those who design AI systems and, even more so, those who use them are not isolated individuals. They can come together to co-design solutions that meet their needs and collectively leverage available technologies.

It is therefore essential to promote participatory AI by actively involving workers, end users, and communities in the design and implementation of AI systems. This approach ensures that these systems reflect people's needs, values, and expectations. The key principles guiding this vision include inclusive engagement, co-creation, transparency and explainability, ethics, and social justice. The proposals developed by CNEL for the banking and insurance sector largely align with this approach. First and foremost, the document advocates for the creation of committees and observatories that include trade union representatives, as well as the strengthening of workers' rights to information and consultation regarding the implementation of AI systems.

Additionally, it calls for the establishment of ethical standards through mandatory ethical audits conducted periodically by independent third parties. This measure aims to mitigate risks associated with algorithmic bias, which can lead to workplace discrimination.

Another key issue is skills development, ensuring that both workers and citizens have the necessary capabilities to actively participate in AI-driven transformations. This requires a redesign of continuous training systems, focusing on upskilling and reskilling. The document also emphasizes the importance of joint training initiatives involving both employers/managers and worker representatives.

In a time of rapid transformation, where the opacity of technological systems makes predictions increasingly difficult, the role of institutions becomes even more crucial. Technological innovations intersect with other ongoing transformations—ranging from environmental to demographic shifts—demanding a new phase of industrial policies, labor policies, and industrial relations capable of guiding these processes and shaping their impacts toward a desirable future.

To support these changes, CNEL has established OPERA (Osservatorio PolitichE e Relazioni industriali per l'intelligenza Artificiale partecipativa - Political and Industrial Relations Observatory for participatory Artificial Intelligence), an observatory dedicated to participatory AI. OPERA aims to create a database of company cases showcasing participatory AI applications, with a particular focus on the role of collective bargaining at both company and sectoral levels.

The analysis of these cases will help assess AI's impact on productivity, work organization, and job quality, ultimately contributing to the development of guidelines and best practices for AI governance.

The acronym OPERA evokes work (opera in Italian) one of the three fundamental forms of human activity—alongside labor and action—identified by Hannah Arendt in *The Human Condition* (1958). Opera (work) has three key characteristics: duration, as it creates objects that endure over time and outlive their creators; artificiality, as it brings into existence something not found in nature; and collective significance, as it contributes to the construction of a shared world, providing a stable framework for human life.

These three principles inspire CNEL's reflection on artificial intelligence, while maintaining the dynamic tension between work and action—a balance shaped by the role of industrial policies and labor relations.

LINK

Osservazioni e Proposte del Consiglio Nazionale dell'Economia e del Lavoro sulle politiche industriali per l'Intelligenza Artificiale. Un'analisi dei settori bancario e assicurativo, 24 ottobre 2024,
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THE IMPACTS OF AI ADOPTION IN THE IRISH LABOUR MARKET AND PUBLIC SERVICE

David Hallinan, NESC Ireland

Europe needs to position itself to be an early adopter in the artificial intelligence (AI) sector. For its part Ireland hosts the European headquarters of some of the world's leading AI tech companies, including OpenAI, Alphabet, Meta, Apple and Microsoft. The Irish NESC would like to engage with these companies and other stakeholders to understand the challenges and opportunities, with a particular interest in how AI impacts on labour markets, demand for skills and innovation in both the public and private sectors.

In place since 2021, Ireland's National AI Strategy emphasises the importance of building public trust in AI, leveraging AI to realise economic and societal benefits, and creating the enabling conditions to allow AI to improve productivity and drive innovation. Its overall goal is to drive the adoption of trustworthy, person-centred AI, while promoting ethical practices and robust data privacy standards.

In terms of research that has been undertaken in Ireland to examine the potential impacts of AI on the labour market, in 2024 NESC Ireland published 'Towards a Better Work Strategy'. Based on an international literature review and a wide-ranging stakeholder consultation process, this report identifies AI as one of the key strategic challenges that will transform the labour market. To date, AI has had a greater impact on job quality than on job quantity. AI has the potential to improve job quality by automating otherwise tedious or repetitive tasks, providing workers with more free time to engage in creative forms of work or to socialise with co-workers. However, the use of AI can also reduce job quality. Task automation can create a more intensive, high-pressure work environment. AI application can pose risks to workers' privacy and autonomy, and can introduce or perpetuate biases in the workplace or during recruitment processes.

NESC's research on AI also found that AI adoption levels remain relatively low in smaller firms. Many companies have yet to invest in AI adoption due to uncertainties in terms of realising a return on such investment. The report stresses the importance of social dialogue and collective bargaining to realise the benefits of AI but also to mitigate associated risks and recommends a process of co-design both for workplace practices and public policy relating to AI.

In terms of other studies that have examined the labour market impacts of AI, an analysis co-developed by the Irish Department of Finance and the Department of Enterprise, Trade & Employment looked at the level of AI occupational exposure in the Irish labour market. Specific occupations were examined in terms of their relative AI complementarity and substitution risk (risk of displacement). There are some caveats with this study, in that it look at a fairly narrow set (10) of tasks and the research predates the latest wave of generative AI. Ireland's labour market was found to be marginally more exposed to AI, with 63% of workers 'highly exposed' as compared with 60%

for other advanced economies. However, Ireland also has a relatively high share of persons working in highly complementary roles.

In terms of the issue of AI adoption in the public service, this is dealt with under Strand 4 of the 2021 National AI Strategy, which sets out a coordinated approach to AI adoption for the public sector. The public service should take a lead in demonstrating responsible and ethical use of AI, while fostering collaboration and experimentation with the private sector. In January 2024 the Government published specific guidance on the use of AI in public services, and these are broadly based on the requirements for ethical AI use in the European Commission's Ethical Guidelines for Trustworthy AI.

In terms of some examples of AI adoption in the agricultural sector, the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) has published an Animal Health Surveillance Strategy (2023-2028) which seeks to apply AI and machine learning to examine data from existing government agricultural data flows to enhance surveillance activities. One project that illustrates this ambition is the bovine tuberculosis (bTB) detection project. This project is a partnership between the DAFM and IBM which uses the Animal Health Computer System dataset comprised of 6.8 million test results. Using this dataset, AI can generate predictions of future Bovine TB risk at animal level and enable improved case management by veterinarians. Another project in the agriculture sector focuses on using AI to improve piglet survival rates. This involves automated monitoring to examine piglet feeding patterns. The aim of this project is to reduce pre-weaning mortality, improve production efficiency and enhance piglet welfare. This research will also inform sow and piglet husbandry practices.

In the health sector, the Irish Department of Health has published a Digital Health Framework for Ireland (2024-2030) which seeks to use AI to improve diagnostics, support precision medicine, enhance patient monitoring, aid data quality and assist drug development. One noteworthy project funded by the Irish Health Service Executive (HSE) involves using AI to perform automated extraction of kidney failure concepts from free-text clinical notes. Researchers from the University of Galway are using AI to extract structured information from unstructured (free text) data in the national Kidney Disease Clinical Patient Management System (KDCPMS).

In the transport sector, Dublin City Council is a participant in the EU-funded SynchroniCity initiative where participating cyclists carry sensors to record variables such as speed, road surface quality, swerving, heavy braking etc. Dublin City Council will use the AI-based analytics to inform future cycling infrastructure planning decisions.

In terms of future NESC research, we are undertaking a programme of research with a focus on AI adoption in public services. Some of the guiding questions include:

- How is AI, and new waves of generative AI, continuing to shape the labour market, occupational exposures and skills needs?
- How prevalent is AI in the context of public service delivery?
- How can AI improve public service delivery?
- What are the risks associated with AI adoption and what safeguards are needed?
- What are the emerging regulatory gaps as Ireland progresses implementation of the EU AI Act?

This research seeks to identify some of the emerging issues arising in the context of AI adoption in the public service, including in the context of the current wave of GenAI. Some key considerations include the appropriateness of ethical or regulatory frameworks, the adequacy of data privacy protections, human rights assessments, and public engagement and transparency in AI governance.

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HOW TO CREATE A FRAMEWORK FOR THE ACCEPTABILITY OF AI DEPLOYMENT IN FRENCH SOCIETY?

Marianne Tordeux-Bitker, ESEC of France, Acting Differently for Social and Environmental Innovation Group (France digitale)

For the past ten years, public policies in France have been leveraging AI to drive economic development, in the name of innovation and to ensure the strategic autonomy of France and Europe. While it is essential to have proprietary technological resources and to build a strong and strategic Europe in economic and commercial terms, the French Economic, Social, and Environmental Council (CESE) emphasizes that AI systems and associated infrastructures should only be deployed if they are genuinely useful and serve the public interest. The French ESEC calls for the deployment of AI through a framework based on four inseparable criteria:

- respect for planetary boundaries,
- respect for fundamental rights and individual freedoms,
- social progress, and
- economic development.

Let me focus specifically on how AI can be deployed while ensuring social progress (job preservation, working conditions) and economic development, particularly in the current geopolitical context.

1- Can AI ensure social progress ?

When you consider the impact of AI on employment, in particular in the French society, the questions you can ask are : how many, who and how. How many people will have their jobs transformed, who is the most vulnerable, and how will the working conditions evolve.

Does AI destroy jobs? How many jobs are at stake?

It is extremely complex to anticipate the impacts of AI on the labor market, especially since these forecasts heavily depend on the public policies implemented in each country.

Over the past decade, analyses have tended to adopt either:

- a very negative perspective, emphasizing the substitution of human labor by AI; or
- a more optimistic perspective, focusing on efficiency gains and the emergence of new types of work resulting from AI implementation.

A 2023 study by the International Labour Organization in Geneva predicts that less than 3% of jobs could be fully automated in the short term. However, one certainty remains: AI will transform the labor market, particularly in certain professions.

Who is the most vulnerable?

The most vulnerable jobs in the face of AI are those that are automatable. Two sectors stand out as being the most exposed: Financial services and Insurance.

Certain social groups are also at greater risk:

- Administrative workers
- Women, who are 1.5 times more likely to need to change roles due to AI compared to men, as they are overrepresented in jobs more exposed to AI. In the US, the 15 most exposed jobs are held by women 71% of the time, according to a study by Revelio Labs.
- Young graduates: This might seem counterintuitive since younger generations are generally considered more tech-savvy. However, as they enter the job market in roles such as interns, apprentices, or entry-level employees, they often start with simple, repetitive tasks that are more easily replaced by AI. This raises significant questions about career planning.

Finally, how does AI transform working conditions?

AI is certain to have, and already has, direct consequences on working conditions. These effects can be both positive and negative.

Positive impacts:

- Simplifying complex tasks
- Delegating low-value-added activities
- Optimizing the efficiency of completed tasks
- Diversifying skillsets

Negative impacts:

- Creating a sense of loss of control or skills
- Intensifying workloads
- Reducing autonomy
- Potentially leading to surveillance or control mechanisms in the worst cases

This is why it is essential to:

- Integrate AI into social dialogue
- Adopt a national interprofessional agreement (ANI) on how AI should be deployed in companies.

This requires bringing all social partners to the table to ensure that AI deployment in businesses is controlled, serves workers, and aligns with identified needs.

2- Should AI be deployed only for geopolitical purposes ?

The development of AI takes place in a complex geopolitical context. AI is a dual-use innovation, serving both civilian and military purposes. This dual nature explains why states—particularly the United States, China, and Russia—are engaged in a global battle for access to technological power. Recent developments, including statements from Donald Trump, Elon Musk, American tech giants, and China's response with announcements of more advanced and "open source" generative AI tools than their U.S. counterparts, constantly underscore the political and geopolitical dimensions of access to this technology.

One can assess a state's technological power by several factors: (i) The ability to reach users; (ii) The capacity to collect and build massive data sets, (iii) The expertise to design algorithms, (iv) Access to and retention of talent, or (v) the dominance, to varying degrees, across the AI value chain.

We have to admit and be realistic : the AI value chain (from semiconductor production to AI system design) is largely dominated by the United States and China.

Yet, even though Europe is lagging, it must not give up. It must continue its efforts to develop technological champions, enabling the assertion of a third path. This path would support an innovation model that upholds:

- Fundamental rights and individual freedoms
- Environmental and climate objectives
- Social progress

Is this pursuit futile? No. Proof can be taken through EU cloud computing systems and large language models (LLMs): Europe's presence remains modest but credible, and allows us to play an active role in the worldwide race for AI.

ESEC recommendations:

- Revise public procurement rules to strengthen the position of EU innovations.
- Increase funding for research focused on breakthrough innovations, and engage private investors, particularly institutional ones, to take their share in financing European innovations despite the associated risks.
- Harmonize business law across the EU without lowering existing standards for social protection, social rights, workers' rights, and environmental law.
- Leverage competition law tools to monitor and penalize abusive or dominant behavior, enabling the emergence and growth of operators, particularly European ones.
- Train, retain, and attract talent in Europe, ensuring the greatest diversity of profiles.

LINK

Pour une IA au service de l'intérêt général, Marianne Tordeux Bitker et Erik Meyer, Janvier 2025 :
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THE CHALLENGE OF AI FOR PRODUCTIVE ACTIVITY IN SPAIN: OPPORTUNITIES AND RISKS

César Maurín Castro, ESC Spain

Artificial intelligence holds immense potential in Spain to transform productivity across various sectors, yet its implementation presents both opportunities and risks that must be properly managed. The country's digitalization experienced significant progress due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which accelerated the adoption of technologies such as teleworking, e-commerce, online education, and telemedicine. This process was accompanied by governmental plans aimed at modernising public administrations, digitalizing small and medium-sized enterprises, and enhancing the digital capabilities of society. As a result, Spain has improved its position in the DESI index, which measures the level of digitalization across European Union countries.

The emergence of generative AI, particularly with the introduction of ChatGPT, marks a global milestone that has captured the attention of businesses, administrations, and citizens.

This technology enables process optimization and enhances competitiveness. However, its expansion is constrained by the limitations of current legislation, particularly concerning the use of data, which is essential for the functioning of these systems.

At the European level, it is crucial to foster innovation in order to narrow the technological gap between the European Union, the United States, and China. In response, the European Union has started promoting initiatives to increase investment in technological innovation and improve cybersecurity, while also implementing more rigorous regulations concerning the use of AI, cloud services, and data. In this context, it is essential to find an appropriate balance between regulating AI and protecting data, so that Spain and Europe can compete effectively in an increasingly digitalized global environment, seeking for an equilibrium that encourages innovation without compromising the protection of rights and security.

LINK

- [Executive Summary Report on the socio-economic and labour situation - Economic and Social Council of Spain 2023](#)
- [España Digital 2026](#)
- [The future of European competitiveness: Report by Mario Draghi](#)

AUTOMATION, AI TECHNOLOGIES, AND THE REDEFINITION OF THE INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS SYSTEM: WHERE ARE WE HEADING?

Luis Pais Antunes, President of ESC Portugal

The rise of automation and artificial intelligence (AI) is transforming industries, labour markets, and the nature of work itself. Although frequently associated, automation and AI are distinct yet interconnected concepts. Automation focuses on performing predefined tasks with minimal human intervention, aiming to streamline processes and improve efficiency. In contrast, AI leverages algorithms and data to replicate cognitive functions such as reasoning, learning, and decision-making, allowing systems to adapt to unpredictable scenarios.

These technologies are reshaping industrial relations by influencing employer-employee dynamics, job structures, and workforce requirements. Automation technologies, including robotics and software algorithms, are displacing routine and repetitive jobs. At the same time, they create demand for new roles requiring advanced skills, such as AI trainers, robotics technicians, and data scientists. This dual effect highlights the need for continuous reskilling and upskilling to prepare workers for the jobs of tomorrow.

In Europe, quantitative models predict that AI could displace millions of jobs by 2030. In Portugal, studies suggest similar trends, with an estimated reduction of 1.1 million jobs and a suppression of 50% of work hours by the same year. Despite these predictions, the actual impact of AI remains uncertain, as its widespread adoption is still in its early stages. For example, the Portuguese automotive sector demonstrates that automation can increase productivity without significantly affecting employment levels, provided that adequate organizational and technical infrastructures are in place.

The broader adoption of AI is hindered by several challenges. As of 2023, only 7.9% of Portuguese companies with more than 10 employees had adopted AI solutions, far below the National Digital Strategy's target of 75% adoption by 2030. Large companies lead the way, with 35.4% adopting AI tools, while small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) lag significantly. This disparity underscores the urgency of accelerating digital transformation and addressing barriers such as cost, lack of technical expertise, and limited access to training.

The redefinition of industrial relations also involves the role of unions and social partners. Traditionally focused on negotiating wages and working conditions, unions must now adapt to address challenges such as job security, equitable distribution of technological benefits, and the regulation of algorithmic decision-making. However, evidence suggests that unions in Portugal are not fully aware of the implications of automation and AI, limiting their ability to advocate for proactive measures.

The transition to a more automated and AI-driven industrial environment presents opportunities and risks. On the positive side, automation can enhance workers' capabilities, reduce physical and repetitive workloads, and increase productivity. However, if not managed strategically, these technologies could exacerbate job displacement, inequality, and organizational inefficiencies. Sociological studies suggest that successful implementation depends on aligning technological advancements with organizational redesign, workforce development, and policy frameworks.

In conclusion, automation and AI are poised to transform industrial relations, offering the potential for innovation and efficiency while presenting significant challenges for employment, social equity, and governance. Addressing these challenges requires a collaborative effort among governments, companies, unions, and workers to ensure that technological advancements benefit all stakeholders and support a sustainable and inclusive future of work.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND LABOUR MARKET

Zornitsa Roussinova, President of ESC Bulgaria

The Digital Transition is one of the three strategic priorities of the Economic and Social Council of Bulgaria (ESC BG). A key focus within this priority is the impact of Artificial Intelligence (AI) on the development of Bulgaria's labour market. Last year, ESC BG adopted an in-depth act titled “Analysis of the Expected Effects of Artificial Intelligence on the Labour Market in Bulgaria.”, developed on the proposal of the President of the Republic of Bulgaria.

The analysis highlights both the opportunities and challenges AI creates for the development of the labour market, proposing concrete measures to overcome possible problems. The potential impacts of Artificial Intelligence on Bulgaria's workforce and economy require introduction of regulatory frameworks, developing national regulatory bodies, and fostering expertise within high-risk sectors. Collaborative efforts with all stakeholders, including social partners and civil society, are essential during this process to ensure that regulations are inclusive and effective. To mitigate the risks of job displacement, policies should prioritise reskilling workers, affected by automation. Additionally, enterprises should be encouraged to invest in employee training to prepare the workforce for the changing nature of work.

The analysis states that AI has transformative potential, offering new job opportunities while reshaping existing roles. However, it also poses risks, including increased inequalities and job losses due to automation.

ESC BG emphasises that education and skills development are critical to addressing the challenges posed by AI. Enhancing digital literacy and integrating AI-related skills into education and vocational training programs are priorities. Lifelong learning initiatives and public-private partnerships are vital for reskilling and upskilling workers to adapt to an AI-driven economy.

ESC BG also underscores the risks associated with AI, including rising inequality, income disparities and ethical concerns related to worker rights and data protection. It highlights the importance of addressing these ethical challenges by safeguarding workers' rights and ensuring transparency in AI applications. Measures must prevent data misuse and guarantee human oversight in AI-driven decision-making processes, particularly in hiring, performance evaluation, and task allocation.

ESC BG calls for urgent regulatory alignment with the EU's Artificial Intelligence Act and proactive state involvement to mitigate adverse effects and harness AI's full potential. The main recommendations are:

- **Mitigating Social and Environmental Risks:**
 - Address potential job displacement through comprehensive social policies and workforce reskilling programs.
 - Monitor and reduce the environmental impact of AI, particularly its energy consumption.
- **Skills Development and Education:**
 - Integrate AI-focused training into national education programmes and vocational training.
 - Utilise digital skills profiles developed by social partners to align workforce capabilities with market needs.
 - Encourage lifelong learning initiatives through public-private partnerships.
- **Stakeholder Engagement:**
 - Involve social partners, civil society, and industry stakeholders in policymaking processes to ensure inclusive AI strategies.
- **Regulatory Alignment and Institutional Capacity:**
 - Expedite the creation of legal frameworks and regulatory bodies as mandated by the EU's Artificial Intelligence Act¹.
 - Establish expert teams within high-risk sectors to monitor AI systems and ensure compliance. The expert teams must include representatives of organised civil society and social partners.
- **Fostering Innovation and Economic Growth:**
 - Incentivise investments in AI-related research and development, especially in small and medium enterprises (SMEs).
 - Establish collaborative platforms for innovation involving academia, industry, and government.
- **Data Protection and Cybersecurity:**
 - Enhance cybersecurity frameworks to protect data integrity and privacy in AI systems.
 - Raise awareness about AI-related risks, such as fraud and misinformation.
- **Promoting Ethical AI Use:**

¹ <https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/policies/regulatory-framework-ai>

- Safeguard workers' rights and ensure transparency in AI applications, particularly in high-risk areas like hiring, task allocation, and performance evaluation.
- Develop national standards for ethical AI deployment and monitoring.

By adopting these measures, Bulgaria can not only mitigate the challenges posed by AI but also position itself as a leader in the digital transformation of labour markets, aligning with EU standards and global trends. During the last years, the Economic and Social Council of Bulgaria has developed several acts (analyses and opinions), examining the expected effects of AI on the labour market in Bulgaria. AI-related issues are a key focus for ESC BG, as evidenced by the number of acts adopted on the topic. In the first semester of 2025, ESC BG is going to work a new analysis on the topic titled "The age of Artificial Intelligence: balance between regulation, economic efficiency and social justice".

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["Analysis of the Expected Effects of Artificial Intelligence on the Labour Market in Bulgaria. Proposals for Concrete Measures to Overcome the Problems"](#) (2024), su proposta del Presidente della Repubblica della Bulgaria;

Parere su ["The Role of Artificial Intelligence in Human Capital Management and Working Conditions of Digital Platform Workers in Bulgaria \(COVID-19 - Catalyst of Digital Transformation in Bulgaria\)"](#) (2023), own-initiative opinion;

Parere su ["Digital Bulgaria: policies, measures and challenges"](#) (2023), parere di propria iniziativa;

Parere su ["Digital Transformation in Bulgaria – Challenges and Opportunities in the Context of Europe's Digital Future"](#) (2020), parere di propria iniziativa;

Parere su ["The Future of Labour: Challenges of the Fourth Industrial Revolution"](#) (2018), parere di propria iniziativa.

NAVIGATING META-MODERNITY: AI AND THE EVOLUTION OF SOCIAL DIALOGUE INSTITUTIONS

Apostolos Xirafis, Secretary General ESC of Greece (OKE)

The address, "Navigating Meta-modernity: AI and the Evolution of Social Dialogue Institutions," discusses the profound social, political, and ethical challenges presented by Artificial Intelligence (AI). The speaker emphasizes that AI's impact extends far beyond its technical aspects, reshaping labor markets, decision-making processes, and societal norms. In this era of "meta-modernity," characterized by a mix of modernist optimism and postmodernist skepticism, complexity, interconnectedness, and accelerated change define the world. AI both embodies and accelerates these transformations, posing a critical question: how can social dialogue institutions evolve to foster inclusion, fairness, and stability in an AI-driven world?

The speaker identifies three key elements of meta-modernity that are particularly relevant to the integration of AI:

1. **Interconnected Complexity:** AI has linked global systems, from supply chains to governance, creating a world where decisions made in one area can have far-reaching consequences, often without the buffers of the past.
2. **Accelerated Change:** AI's rapid development is outpacing the ability of traditional institutions, such as social dialogue bodies, to adapt. Labor markets are shifting quickly, leaving workers and communities behind. Institutions must adjust to address these disruptions.
3. **Cultural Plurality:** The era of meta-modernity demands embracing multiple perspectives and balancing tradition with innovation, efficiency with ethics, and local with global concerns. Social dialogue institutions must remain flexible and open to experimentation.

In light of these challenges, the speaker argues that social dialogue institutions—long established as slow-moving, consensus-driven entities—must adapt to the AI-driven world and become active participants in AI governance. These institutions have a crucial role in ensuring that AI serves the public good, emphasizing fairness and social cohesion.

AI introduces both challenges and opportunities for social dialogue institutions, particularly in three key areas:

1. **Work and Employment:** Automation driven by AI is reshaping labor markets, favoring high-skilled jobs while eliminating middle-skilled, routine positions. Social dialogue institutions are needed to mediate between workers, employers, and policymakers, ensuring fair transitions and helping societies navigate these changes. Industrial relations face new challenges as technology creates new forms of work.
2. **Decision-Making:** AI is increasingly used to inform policy decisions, yet many AI systems function as "black boxes," with decision-making processes that are not fully understood. This lack of transparency poses a challenge to the trust and accountability that underpin social dialogue.

3. **Inequality Amplification:** AI can exacerbate existing biases, reinforcing social inequalities related to gender, race, or economic status. Social dialogue institutions must advocate for AI governance that is transparent, ethical, and promotes fairness.

Despite these challenges, AI also presents opportunities for reimagining social dialogue:

1. **Enhanced Collaboration:** AI can act as a mediator, processing large amounts of data to identify common ground among stakeholders. This could enable more efficient negotiations and help labor and management reach mutually beneficial agreements. On the other hand, industrial relations are deep rooted in the European 'consensus building' tradition and are part of the 'acquis communautaire'.
2. **Digital Platforms for Inclusion:** AI-powered platforms can give a voice to marginalized groups and gig workers, expanding participation in social dialogue and making it more inclusive and dynamic.
3. **Anticipatory Governance:** AI enables predictive analytics that can help social dialogue institutions anticipate future disruptions, such as labor market changes or demographic shifts. This proactive approach allows institutions to address potential conflicts before they arise.
4. **Ethical Frameworks:** Europe's commitment to human rights and ethical governance places it in a unique position to lead the world in establishing ethical AI standards. Institutions must ensure AI systems are transparent, accountable, and promote fairness and dignity for all workers.

To navigate these changes, the speaker proposes three key actions for social dialogue institutions:

1. **Invest in AI Literacy:** It is essential for decision-makers, trade unions, and the public to understand the capabilities and limitations of AI. By fostering AI literacy, we can reduce misinformation and engage in more informed, rational discussions about AI's role in society.
2. **Redesign Institutions for Flexibility:** Traditional social dialogue institutions must embrace flexibility and adaptability, moving away from rigid, slow processes. Experimentation, pilot programs, and adaptive frameworks will help institutions respond to the rapid pace of change.
3. **Strengthen Multilateral Cooperation:** Since AI transcends borders, governance of AI should not be confined to national frameworks. A coordinated, international approach to AI governance is necessary to ensure ethical standards and equitable outcomes across nations.

A key question arises: can AI replace human dialogue in social dialogue institutions? The speaker argues that adaptation is the path to follow in the new AI era. While AI can process data and simulate conversation, it lacks the human qualities—empathy, trust, and shared societal values—that are central to meaningful dialogue. AI can enhance the dialogue process by providing data-driven insights, streamlining decision-making, and broadening participation, but it cannot replace the human element of conversation that underpins social cohesion.

In conclusion, AI is a powerful tool with the potential to reshape social dialogue institutions, but its success depends on how it is used. Social dialogue must evolve to ensure fairness, solidarity, and

inclusivity in an AI-driven world. AI should serve people, not replace them, and the ultimate goal of social dialogue remains to strengthen societal bonds and ensure that no one is left behind in this new era.

LINK

Social dialogue and the future of work

https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/wcmsp5/groups/public/%40dgreports/%40dcomm/%40publ/documents/publication/wcms_833561.pdf (Greece: Enhancing social dialogue in the new world of work)

<https://www.ilo.org/media/211221/download>

https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/wcmsp5/groups/public/@ed_dialogue/@dialogue/documents/meetingdocument/wcms_605757.pdf (La Dichiarazione di Atene sul dialogo sociale e il futuro del lavoro dei Consigli economici e sociali e istituzioni simili)

