

## Joint Statement on AI in the Workplace

### Joint Statement by Oliver Röpke, President of the European Economic and Social Committee, and Renato Brunetta, President of the Italian National Council for Economics and Labour (CNEL)

Following the conference on "Artificial Intelligence and Industrial Relations," held in Rome on January 24, 2025, the President of the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC), Oliver Röpke, and the President of the Italian National Council for Economics and Labour (CNEL), Renato Brunetta, reaffirmed their commitment to fostering inclusive governance and promoting the ethical and participatory development of artificial intelligence (AI).

The conference, jointly organized by CNEL and EESC, provided a platform for representatives of economic and social councils, academia, civil society, and industry from across Europe to discuss the transformative potential of AI in the workplace. The event emphasized the importance of balancing technological innovation with the protection of workers' rights and fostering social equity.

The presidents of both consultative bodies highlighted that social dialogue and worker involvement are critical to preserving workers' fundamental rights and promoting 'trustworthy' AI in the workplace. Ensuring humans remain in control in all human-machine interactions is a priority. Current legal frameworks must address gaps in worker protections, particularly in the face of rapidly advancing AI systems.

President Röpke said, *"This conference marks a significant milestone in our collaboration with CNEL, bringing together diverse perspectives to ensure AI benefits all Europeans. I am confident that through dialogue and shared commitment, we can make AI a tool for social progress and economic resilience, safeguarding the principles of fairness, inclusion, and democratic governance."*

President Brunetta added, *"The launch of CNEL's OPERA Observatory on Participatory AI demonstrates our dedication to involving all stakeholders in the AI transition. Our partnership with the EESC and other national councils reflects our shared mission to shape a future where AI supports human dignity, social cohesion, and ethical innovation."*

Discussions also underscored the need for substantial/ immense training initiatives to equip workers and the general public with the skills necessary to benefit from AI. Particular attention must be paid to groups that face systemic barriers, such as women, older individuals, less-skilled workers, and people with disabilities, ensuring equitable access to AI-related opportunities and training.

The presidents stressed that social dialogue plays a crucial role in ensuring that AI deployment in workplaces remains transparent, participatory, and aligned with the principles of fairness. Legislative initiatives should address the gaps in the protection of workers' rights at work and ensure that humans remain in control in all human-machine interactions.

The conference explored the potential of AI to drive economic progress while recognizing its challenges, including risks of job displacement, increased workplace surveillance, and potential inequalities. With the adoption of the EU AI Act, Europe has taken a leadership role in regulating AI, establishing a robust framework that aligns technological innovation with ethical principles.

## **Background**

The conference builds on the strong cooperation between the EESC and CNEL in addressing issues related to digital transformation and the future of work. It brought together experts and representatives from six national economic and social councils, including Bulgaria, France, Greece, Ireland, Portugal, and Spain, to share experiences and best practices.

During the event, CNEL launched the OPERA Observatory on Participatory AI. This initiative aims to create a database of best practices for participatory AI systems, emphasizing the inclusion of workers, end-users, and communities in the design, implementation, and monitoring of AI technologies.

The partnership between EESC and CNEL reflects the critical role of economic and social councils in bridging the gap between civil society and policymakers. By fostering dialogue, and inclusive governance, the EESC and CNEL are committed to ensuring that AI becomes a force for sustainable development, equity, and progress in Europe.