



**ALL EYES ON AI:
Tackling Digitalisation
and Artificial Intelligence
in the workplace**

23-24 NOVEMBER 2023

**LOCATION: TRADE UNION HOUSE
Ratavartijankatu 2A
00520 Helsinki (Pasila district),
FINLAND**



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 **industriAll**
EUROPEAN TRADE UNION



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Introduction:

Over the past year, artificial intelligence (AI) has been constantly making headlines, especially since [ChatGPT](#) stunned the world with its ability to mimic human speech. The reaction to such generative AI has been very strong, with many high-profile people [calling for a pause](#) in its development. At EU level, policymakers are currently trying to regulate AI with the much-debated AI Act. However, as is all too often the case, the [world of work is falling off the radar](#). At international level, the G7 has also agreed a set of guidelines to tackle AI, but much continues to be based on a voluntary principle.

IndustriAll European Trade Union is calling for a legislative proposal to regulate AI at the workplace and for stronger collective bargaining at all levels to ensure that workers reap the benefits of the introduction of AI and that workers' rights are protected. Tackling AI requires a holistic approach which implies a clear regulatory framework, as well as collective agreements at all levels, especially at sectoral level.

The EU's AI Act is a step in the right direction, but trade unions are calling for a specific legal instrument to address the impact of AI on the world of work. Trade unions have [welcomed](#) the important improvements secured by the progressive forces in the European Parliament. These include an obligation to consult workers and their unions before introducing AI into the workplace. However, many concerns remain. We need a dedicated instrument to ensure that workers can also reap the benefits of technological innovation and that their fundamental rights are not undermined by the introduction of AI applications in the workplace.

Legislation is key to tackling AI at the workplace, however collective bargaining and social dialogues are also essential. For many, collective bargaining is only about securing better wages and improving core working conditions, such as working time. But collective bargaining goes much further than that. It is also about ensuring a fair digital and green twin transition and a fairer society. In countries where collective bargaining structures are strong and work well at all levels, especially at the sectoral level, we can see that the transition is much more advanced and benefits everyone. IndustriAll Europe's [collective bargaining database](#) provides a number of good examples of collective agreements on the transition, including on ensuring access to on-the-job training for reskilling and upskilling.

We are at a crossroads in the development and use of AI, with the rapid emergence of sometimes unexpected capabilities, as shown by ChatGPT. But there is no [technological determinism](#). On the contrary, intelligent and rapidly evolving regulation, put in place as a matter of urgency, can not only avoid the risk of falling behind the pace of innovation, but also shape its character. The world of work cannot be treated by default as a testbed for new AI. Technological progress must go hand in hand with social progress!

In light of these rapid developments of the ongoing digital transition, industriAll Europe's members are meeting to discuss the use of AI technologies in the manufacturing sectors, as well as their implications for workers. The workshop aims to support industriAll Europe and its affiliates in developing strategies and appropriate tools to reap the benefits of AI applications in the workplace.



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When and where?

The **'All eyes on AI: Tackling Digitalisation and Artificial Intelligence in the workplace'** workshop will take place over the course of **one and a half days, on 23 – 24 November 2023 in Helsinki, Finland** (Trade Union House, Rata­varti­jankatu 2A, 00520 Helsinki (Pasila district). The participants will have the opportunity to exchange on the impacts of AI at the workplace in the framework of **three panel discussions and two working group sessions**. Together we will debate about the best trade union strategies to tackle AI and develop tools for trade unionists to ensure a fair digital transition.

How?

Three panels to assess the state-of-play of the use and impacts of AI at the workplace and define our trade union strategy for a fair digital transition.





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I. Panel: Setting the scene

This panel aims to set the scene by highlighting the extent to which AI technologies are used in the workplaces in the manufacturing sectors across Europe.

There is growing [evidence](#) of the impact of AI on the world of work. A recent survey-based study by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [found that](#), in manufacturing, workers were experiencing increased intensity and stress as a result of the faster pace of work dictated by AI, and were increasingly concerned about the privacy of their data. The study also however showed that the solution lay in the involvement of workers through their unions. AI tends to have a more positive impact when [workers are consulted](#) about the introduction of the new technology and trained to use it effectively.

Technological advancements are frequently felt more immediately within the workplace and are most effectively tackled there. The OECD reported a growing sense of fear and concern among workers in the manufacturing industry, with 4% expressing great worry about potential job loss in the coming decade. A survey of workers in manufacturing companies employing AI revealed that 15% knew of a colleague who had lost their job as a direct consequence of AI implementation. Nevertheless, the potential change in employment varies widely across countries. There is a noticeable disparity between low-income countries, where only 0.4% of total employment is potentially exposed to the effects of automation, and high-income countries, where the share rises to 5.5%.

The impact that technology has on job quality in workplaces should not be overlooked. While it can automate routine tasks and create opportunities for more stimulating work, it can also be implemented in ways that limit worker autonomy or intensify workloads. The concern regarding the incorporation of artificial intelligence in the workplace revolves around its increasing implementation and lack of workers' consultation. Therefore, it is crucial to ensure that workers and their unions are informed and consulted, as well as involved in the deployment and use of new technologies through collective bargaining at all levels.

One of the big "elephants in the room" is AI's potential to increase productivity. But the key issue in assessing the impact of any AI application on job quantity is whether it will raise productivity sufficiently to counter the adverse effects of workers' substitution. The gains in AI application should be shared with workers in the form of higher wages. However, the last two decades have seen a decoupling of productivity and wages in many countries, with wages growing more slowly than productivity. As trade unions, it will be crucial to develop a strategy to ensure that productivity gains are also shared with workers.

The distinguished panellists will present facts and figures about the state-of-the-art deployment of AI technologies in companies and their implications for workers. The academic perspective will be complemented by the assessment of the European Commission, as well as by the presentation of the reality on the ground in Germany and Finland. **The working group session** following the panel discussion will give participants the opportunity to deepen their exchange on the national reality in their countries.



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II. Panel: Shaping AI: What are the trade unions' tools?

Shaping the deployment and use of AI in the world of work needs both adequate regulation and workers' involvement through social dialogue and collective bargaining. **This panel** aims to highlight the role of trade unions in shaping AI at the workplace, also presenting the importance of a clear legal framework to ensure information, consultation, and collective bargaining rights. This is key to also ensure the urgently needed on-the-job training and life-long learning programmes for workers as AI changes the nature of occupations. **The working group session** after the panel discussion will serve to provide participants with an adequate setting to develop trade union tools that can be adapted and applied in workplaces across Europe.

A well-functioning social dialogue and collective bargaining system ensures not only that workers will be timely informed and consulted about the introduction of new technologies in the workplace, but also that they will have the opportunity to: negotiate adequate training in the use of the new technology; adapt the work organisation; update the necessary health and safety provisions; and establish channels for changing technologies that might not be working well. Workers and their trade union representatives are the ones who know best the reality of the impacts of AI technologies in the workplace, because their daily activities are directly affected by them. Involving them can only improve the functioning of AI and ensure a digital transition that works for everyone.

On-the-job training and [lifelong-learning](#) programmes require massive investment and the right framework conditions. In manufacturing, AI has been associated with the deskilling of workers, especially those with medium qualifications. This creates a dangerous polarisation between high-skilled and low-skilled workers. A good example is the electric engine, which is replacing its fossil fuel-based internal combustion predecessor. Much of the diagnostics and repair in the event of damage are done by AI -leaving little room for mechanics, sometimes even engineers. The problem of deskilling is closely linked to the growing 'invisible tasks' created by AI. A process is never fully automated because there are always secondary tasks that workers have to perform to the rhythm of the AI. It may appear that the machine is working on its own, but in fact the worker is struggling to keep up - their role is sometimes reduced to simple, repetitive button-pushing. This is clearly not the improvement in job quality that more rosy promotions of AI herald.

A good solution is early planning and consultation with workers and their unions through proper social dialogue and collective bargaining. This should be done at all levels, but especially at company level, where workers should be involved in co-designing the AI to be introduced. Workers understand the impact of AI on them; their feedback adds a lot of value and should therefore be taken into account.



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III. Panel: Data protection and the implication for trade unions

Since the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) came into force in 2018, it has proven its value in protecting citizens' private data within the European Union. In the past five years, almost 4 billion euro in fines have been imposed against companies that breach GDPR rules. The fines have been issued against big tech companies like [Meta](#), with cases involving personal data from social media users; but also in cases concerning the protection of workers, like the [ruling](#) against H&M on workers' surveillance.

The GDPR is a European regulation and applies to both trade unions and employers, as entities that collect and process data. IndustriAll Europe has published its [GDPR Toolbox for Trade Unionists](#), which explains how unions can make the best use of the rules to protect workers' private data and to shield them against surveillance. The toolbox explains which articles of the GDPR can be used in collective bargaining negotiations to secure trade unions' right to access workers' data, to contact members and potential members, as well as to protect workers' data. Some concrete [examples](#) of sectoral agreements which guarantee the right to digital access can be found in industriAll Europe's collective bargaining [database](#). Ensuring trade unions' right to access workers' data is essential to fight against the misuse of GDPR, when employers cite the rules as an excuse to prevent trade unions from contacting workers.

This panel aims to provide a deeper analysis of the implications of data protection for workers and their trade unions. The distinguished panellists will highlight the advantages of GDPR for unions, explaining how it can be used to protect workers' personal data and ensure the right to access.

Two working group sessions to deepen our exchange:

The participants are invited to take part in one of three working groups which aim to deepen the exchange between members from different countries. There will be two different working group sessions after each panel discussion on 23 November. The working groups aim to provide the participants with an adequate forum to reflect on the input from the panel discussion and share their national reality. By discussing the challenges faced as trade unions in view of tackling AI at the workplace, we can move forward towards developing a strategy and tools to shape AI to the advantage of workers.

Interested participants are invited to find their names on the list of each group. The groups will be moderated by one member of the industriAll Europe Secretariat and one member of the CBSP/CBSP Select Working Party. The moderators will present the guiding questions for the group work and report back to the plenary afterwards.



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DAY 1 – 23 NOVEMBER 2023, 09:00 – 15:00 HRS (local time)

08:30	Registration
09:00	Welcome by Isabelle Barthès, Joint Acting General Secretary of industriAll Europe
09:10	Setting the scene Panel discussion moderated by Isabelle Barthès, Joint Acting General Secretary of industriAll Europe <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Thorben Albrecht, Policy Director, IG Metall• Emmanuel Reich, Researcher, Syndex• Liisa Halme, Liaison Manager in CB Department, Pro Trade Union• Max Uebe, DG EMPL, Head of Unit Future of Work, Youth Employment Q&A session
10:30	Coffee Break
11:00	Working group session: reality on the ground <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Working group I• Working group II• Working group III
12:00	Report back to the plenary
12:30	Lunch Break
13:30	Shaping AI: Trade unions' tool Panel discussion moderated by moderated by Reijo Paananen, Secretary General, Nordic IN Trade Union <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Igor Oliveira, TK Elevator Portugal EWC• Isabelle Schömann, Deputy General Secretary, ETUC• Antonio Ranieri, Head of Department for VET and Skills, CEDEFOP• Brando Benifei, Head of the Italian Delegation, S&D Q&A session



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DAY 1 – 23 NOVEMBER 2023, 15:00 – 17:00 HRS (local time)

15:00	Break
15:30	Working group session: Shaping AI: what are the trade union tools? <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Working group I• Working group II• Working group III
16:30	Report back to the plenary
17:00	Concluding remarks End of Day 1
19:00	Joint Dinner (in the hotel, to be confirmed)

DAY 2 – 24 NOVEMBER 2023, 09:00 – 11:30 HRS (local time)

09:00	Data protection and the implication for trade unions Panel discussion moderated by Martin Jefflén, International Secretary, Unionen <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Aida del Ponce, Senior Researcher, ETUI• Klaus Wermeyer, Nokia EWC• Eric Peres, General Secretary, CNIL• Inese Podgaiska, Secretary General, Association of Nordic Engineers Q&A session
10:30	Coffee Break
11:00	Concluding remarks and next steps of the project
11:30	End of workshops