

Summary and takeaways

EU-funded project CB-EQUAL: Three thematic workshops

1. Artificial Intelligence, Helsinki, 23 & 24 November 2023

This workshop brought together 60 trade union representatives from industriAll Europe's affiliated unions, experts and researchers, to discuss the challenges posed by artificial intelligence (AI) and to define a basis for a trade union strategy for addressing AI in the workplace. The aim is to provide fair digital transformation for workers throughout Europe.

Main takeaways:

- There is a pressing need for a strategy to tackle AI in production processes and manage it for the benefit of workers. Shaping deployment and use of AI in the world of work requires both appropriate regulation and workers' involvement through social dialogue and collective bargaining. AI has massive implications for the monitoring and control of workers if left unregulated.
- IG Metall, Germany, which has traditions as a trendsetter in European collective bargaining, leads the way with its future agreements. These agreements are sectoral, and they establish frameworks for secure employment as well as anticipation of skills needed in a rapidly transforming industry.
- Securing a collectively guaranteed right to training will be crucial for a fair and just digital transformation for all. Training is key to preparing workers to work with AI and adapt to an AI-driven world. Training opportunities can, for example, be provided by public employment authorities, such as in southern Belgium (Wallonia). Training should be a priority for trade unions. A recently implemented labour market reform in Sweden illustrates how negotiated solutions in a tripartite model can significantly enhance the volume of reskilling and upskilling. An agreement concluded by the social partners at the confederal level identified skills needed to work in the manufacturing industries in the future.
- Obviously, collective bargaining can ensure a fair digital transition and the fair use of AI in the workplace.
- Tackling AI requires a holistic approach, encompassing a clear regulatory framework and collective agreements, especially at the sectoral level.
- Trade unions do not stand in the way of technological progress, but they insist that it leads to good jobs for all workers. A prime example is Lamborghini in Italy, where trade unions



and employers are committed to reducing working hours and ensuring that employers take responsibility for continuous lifelong learning.

- A recent study by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) found that, in manufacturing, workers are experiencing increased intensity and stress due to the faster pace of work dictated by AI and are increasingly concerned about the privacy of their data.
- One of the big “elephants in the room” is AI’s potential to increase productivity. However, the key issue in evaluating any AI application’s impact on job quantity is whether it will raise productivity sufficiently to offset the adverse effects of workers’ substitution.
- Since the EU’s General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) came into effect in 2018, it has proven effective in safeguarding citizens’ private data within the European Union. The GDPR regulation applies to both trade unions and employers as entities that collect and process data.
- The new right-wing government in Finland (host country of the event) represents one of the most challenging environments for employed people in Europe, with intentions to diminish workers’ rights, particularly the right to strike and the right to collective bargaining.

2. A right to training for Just Transition, Zagreb, 12 & 13 March 2024

51 trade union representatives from across Europe gathered at industriAll Europe’s workshop in Zagreb, Croatia. In the ongoing ‘European Year of Skills’, trade unions discussed how to realise the right to training for workers that is implemented in all companies in Europe.

Main takeaways:

- There is a major urgency to reskill, upskill, and train workers to deliver dual green and digital transitions that are rapidly transforming jobs and occupations.
- There is a need for massive public and private investments in training; employers have a special responsibility in this context. Employees seeking reskilling may still be asked to contribute financially, alongside employers.
- Training has become a focal point in EU policy. It has been integrated into several key plans and legislative instruments.
- In terms of financing, it will always be a challenge to utilise funds efficiently for upskilling and reskilling.
- The Commission’s only concrete policy proposal put forward so far is the Skills and Talent Package (including the new legislation) which presents an easy-fix solution pushed by employers: attracting migrant workers to Europe without ensuring their equal treatment in the labour market.



- On average, companies train only 40% of their workers, falling short of the 60% target of the European Pillar of Social Rights (EPSR) Action Plan.
- Collective bargaining remains one of the key trade union instruments to anticipate and manage the transition, especially by ensuring training rights for workers.
- In Sweden, a landmark tripartite agreement was turned into law a few years ago, providing financial support for training schemes for both short- and long-term skills development for both workers in employment and those between jobs.
- The managerial workforce receives top-drawer education in technical matters. But there is a noticeable deficiency in training related to leadership and management of people.
- Exploitation of foreign workers remains an issue in certain sectors, such as shipbuilding.
- The workforce is evolving, with an increasing demand for higher-skilled jobs, and training needs to be adapted accordingly.
- IG Metall is developing new plans at both sectoral and company level, establishing a framework to co-govern and anticipate the transformation of industries considering the Green and Digital Transition. The objective is to foster worker and union participation in a company's or sector's long-term strategy, acting proactively rather than reactively to potential crises.
- Companies need to have a very close relationship between the training and the organisational goal. Training in health and safety corresponds with organisational need because they must comply with regulations.
- Employers' struggles to maintain competitiveness by keeping wages low and hiring external talent, result in low productivity.
- Industrial policies are driven by the state, and in consequence, each Member State is directing specific training according to the industrial policy. There is no European Industrial Policy as such.
- Having temporary workers allows companies to avoid investing in their human capital.
- There are concerns about the recognition of skills in certain fields, such as informatics.

3. Bargaining for equality, Istanbul, 9 & 10 October 2024

48 trade unionists from Finland, Italy, Norway, Poland, Romania, Spain, Sweden, and Turkey convened in Istanbul. They gathered, alongside experts, to enhance the capacities of trade unions to push for more equal opportunities in the workplace for disadvantaged groups, including women, LGBTQI+, and disabled workers.



Main takeaways:

- Wage disparities are deeply rooted in historical and structural gender pay inequalities, exacerbated by women's predominance in low-paid and precarious jobs, which significantly contribute to the gender pay gap.
- Trade unions across Europe can draw inspiration from Spain with their promotion of non-discrimination and anti-harassment through collective agreements at both sectoral and company level. Spanish unions are also developing guides and tools to support their representatives in the workplace.
- Notable examples of advancing LGBTQI+ rights in the workplace have been developed by FIOM-CGIL, a recipient of industriAll Europe's Diversity at Work Award, which recognises all families (including same-sex families) in collective agreements. Italian unions are advocating for equal treatment for all parents during bargaining rounds, starting with demands for parental leave for all. Collective agreements can correct unfair practices in national legislation by granting equal rights to all.
- Fighting against violence and harassment in the workplace is bolstered by the ongoing ratification of the International Labour Organisation's Convention 190 (ILO C190) in Member States and the EU's current legislative process on a Directive addressing violence against women, including domestic violence.
- Progress is hindered without training focused on combatting stereotypes. The European Trade Union Institute (ETUI) emphasises that creating inclusive workplaces necessitates a complete paradigm shift.
- In Romania, a dedicated group of activists united 40 organisations, including trade unions, which encouraged Romania's government to ratify ILO C190. The real challenge is implementation and monitoring, as in Spain. Unions must intensify their work and ensure that the upcoming legislation will trickle down through collective agreements to help eliminate harassment at work.
- The new EU Pay Transparency Directive will support trade unions' efforts to fight for equal pay for work of equal value. The work begins now with the transposition at national level and the implementation in law and collective agreements. The Pay Transparency Directive contains new possibilities for trade unions and employers to use hypothetical comparisons when addressing the undervaluation of jobs predominantly carried out by women where there is no actual comparator, and to incorporate these into collective bargaining.
- Real progress in equality requires training and awareness-raising campaigns. There is a pressing need for collective agreements to ensure equal rights and accountability in cases of discrimination.
- The longer-term challenge for trade unions is to facilitate cross-sectoral comparisons in their collective bargaining claims for equal pay for work of equal value.



- Precariousness in employment and/or in family situations (e.g., single parenthood) heightens women's vulnerability to violence and harassment at work. Women workers are more at risk if they are young, urban, discriminated against because of their sexual orientation or religion, already victims of sexual violence, employed in a male-dominated work environment, or required to wear clothing that shows their shape. When it comes to sexual harassment, the situation of victims is often linked to their economic situation.
- Telework agreements must anticipate the risk of gender-based cyberviolence. A key principle is the voluntary nature of telework as provided for in the European social partner Framework Agreement on Telework. In addition, useful clauses can include: the possibility for the worker to request an immediate return to the physical workplace or to move to a different telework location to ensure their safety; employer support in contacting and working with law enforcement or domestic violence support agencies; and enhanced cybersecurity protocols to protect remote workers from all forms of gendered cyberviolence.

Recommendations

- 1) AI should be a focal point of discussion among social partners, and collaborative solutions must be pursued to mitigate the negative impacts on workers. The outcomes for workers related to AI will depend on how it is shaped and applied at all levels.
- 2) There is a need for a legislative proposal to regulate AI in the workplace, as well as stronger collective bargaining at all levels to ensure that workers benefit from the introduction of AI and that their rights are safeguarded.
- 3) Labour and skills shortages must be addressed. Training is necessary for workers to maintain their dignity and provide quality service, which is crucial for remaining competitive.
- 4) Trade unions need to prioritise training, especially in their collective bargaining sessions at all levels. Ensuring workers' rights and access to training is vital for employability in the dual transition and for negotiating quality jobs with competitive wages based on workers' recognised competences. A shift in mindset has begun.
- 5) Regarding women's rights and LGBTIQ+ rights, concluding good collective agreements on equal opportunities is a great win. However, education and training for trade union representatives and workers are needed to raise awareness and ensure non-discrimination on the shop floor.
- 6) When negotiating collective agreements on telework and remote work, unions should consider the potential impact of domestic violence on women workers engaged in telework.

