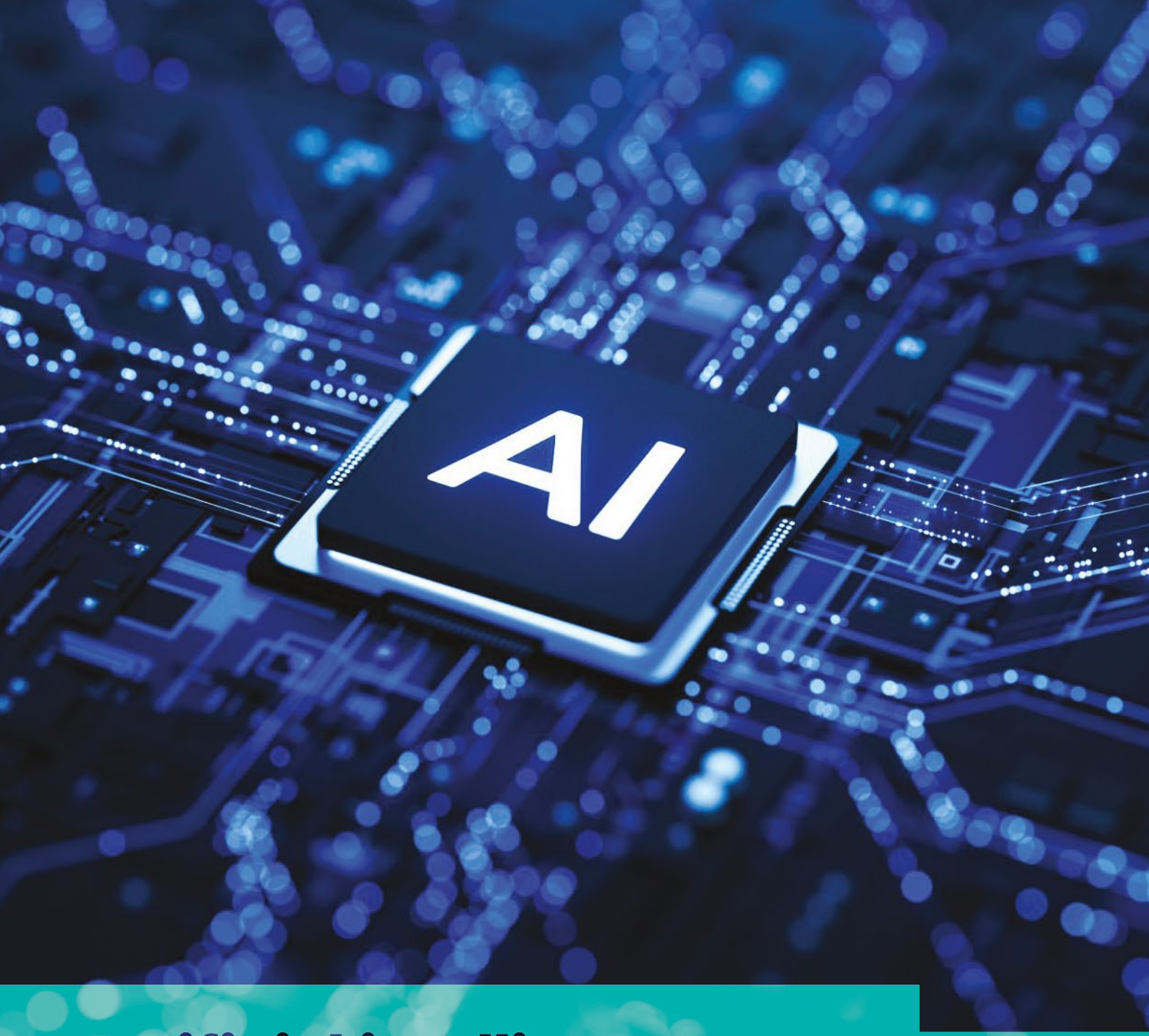

Artificial intelligence: challenges and opportunities for industrial workers and trade union responses

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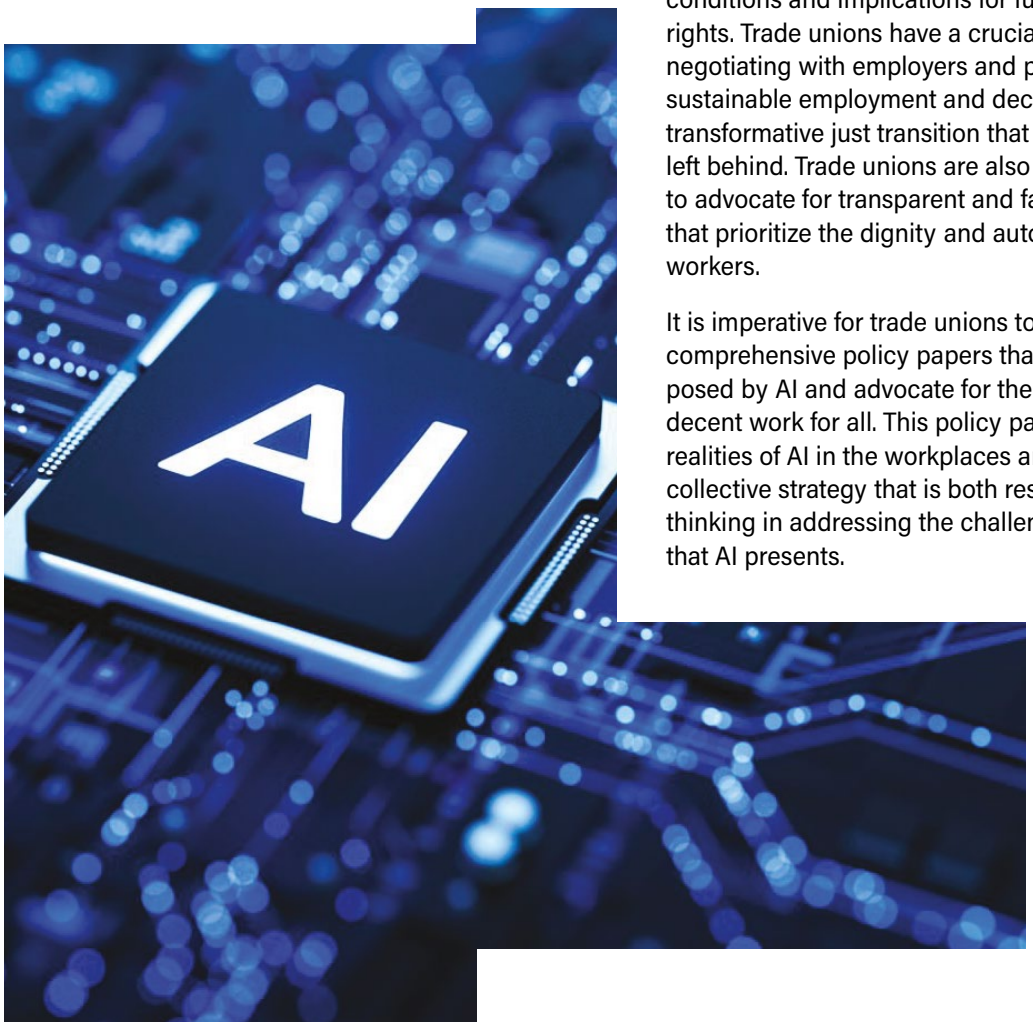
Preamble

Artificial intelligence (AI) is having a profound impact on existing jobs and working conditions in industrial sectors. Many industrial jobs are being transformed by AI-driven technologies, particularly digitalization, advanced information processing, robotics and automation. Surveys indicate that 60 per cent of workers in the manufacturing and finance sectors are worried about losing their jobs to AI within the next ten years. AI also poses risks to workers' rights, including increased surveillance in the workplace, heightened mental stress, and the risks of bias and discrimination, including gender bias, caused by algorithmic management. While AI is generating value in the form of corporate profits, a significant portion of global employment is exposed to unregulated AI systems, contributing to social unrest and deepening inequality. However, AI also offers opportunities to improve workplace safety and enhance efficiency, especially in workplaces facing a lack of workforce due to aging populations.



As AI continues to develop and be rapidly integrated into workplaces, workers need binding legislation to address its diverse impacts on rights at work. However, many governments and companies lack AI-specific regulatory frameworks or safeguard mechanisms. Most trade unions do not yet have collective bargaining agreements specifically addressing AI implementation. It is therefore essential that trade unions have a seat at the table in global, regional, national, and company-level discussions on AI development and deployment. Social dialogue and collective bargaining ensuring workers' rights, quality of jobs and a fair and gender-equal distribution of AI's benefits are key to the future of work in the industrial sectors.

The impact of AI over the past years has prompted lively debates in the trade union movement, addressing issues like algorithmic management, workplace surveillance, data transparency, the impact on working conditions and implications for fundamental workers' rights. Trade unions have a crucial role to play in negotiating with employers and policymakers to secure sustainable employment and decent work, and a gender transformative just transition that ensures no worker is left behind. Trade unions are also uniquely positioned to advocate for transparent and fair AI practices that prioritize the dignity and autonomy of industrial workers.

It is imperative for trade unions to proactively develop comprehensive policy papers that address challenges posed by AI and advocate for the workers' rights and decent work for all. This policy paper examines the realities of AI in the workplaces and aims to build a collective strategy that is both responsive and forward thinking in addressing the challenges and opportunities that AI presents.

1. Algorithmic management and data privacy

Challenges

- **Increased surveillance and privacy invasion**: AI systems used for algorithmic management often involve extensive monitoring of workers' activities, which can lead to a sense of constant surveillance. The system can invade workers' privacy and create a stressful work environment, including mental illness.
- **Bias and discrimination**: Algorithmic management can unintentionally sustain existing biases (including gender biases) or introduce new forms of discrimination. If the data used to train the algorithms is biased, the algorithmic management can make unfair and discriminatory decisions regarding hiring, promotions and performance evaluations. This can also lead to unequal treatment of workers based on gender, ethnic origin or other backgrounds and to worsening existing inequalities in the workplace.
- **Lack of transparency and human control**: Workers often have little or no insight into how algorithmic management make decisions that affect their jobs. The lack of transparency on use of AI will cause mistrust and a feeling of discrimination in industrial relations. Workers may not understand why certain decisions are made, such as why they are assigned specific tasks or why their performance is rated in a particular way, making it difficult to challenge or appeal these decisions.

Opportunities

- **Improved work-life balance**: Algorithmic management can optimize work schedules and task assignments, ensuring that workloads are distributed more evenly and efficiently, which help reducing overwork and burnout, allowing workers to improve work-life balance. Additionally, algorithmic management can assist workers to enhance work efficiency to find more time to focus on priorities and higher value tasks.
- **Empowerment through data insights**: AI systems can provide workers with valuable insights into their performance and productivity. Workers can identify areas for improvement and take proactive steps to enhance their skills and efficiency by analysing the AI collected data. The empowerment of workers through data can lead to better working conditions, job satisfaction and career development opportunities.
- **Reduction of human error**: Algorithm fairly designed with high quality data and proper safeguards can contribute to reduce human errors while humans sometimes unintentionally overlook important details, misinterpret performance or favour certain workers. Workers can also have access to the data driven evaluation on their performances.

1.

Our policy and demands

1 Make sure that transparency and accountability are secured at all workplaces

I. Governments and employers should implement clear regulations and guidelines that require transparency and accountability on how algorithmic management makes decisions affecting workers in the workplaces and prohibit the use of any discriminatory AI systems.

II. Governments and employers should implement mandatory training programmes for government officials, labour inspectors, company executives and managers involved in AI systems and algorithmic management associated with the risks of discrimination.

III. Employers should make sure that transparency and accountability are secure in all workplaces on detailed information about the algorithms used, the data they collect, and how decisions are made.

IV. Employers should work together with trade unions or the workers' representatives to conduct regular audit on the AI systems and work procedures in all workplaces to ensure compliance and to identify any biases or unfair practices that would lead to discrimination.

V. Governments, employers and unions should foster mutual understanding of the AI systems and trust between unions and management through social dialogue that allows workers to fully understand and challenge of AI impacts on their jobs and promotes a fair and transparent work environment.

2 Protect workers' data and privacy to maintain their dignity

I. Governments should establish robust data privacy regulations to protect workers' personal information, including enforcing a crackdown on cybercrime.

II. Employers should limit the collection of personal data to what is strictly necessary for operational purposes.

III. Employers and unions should ensure that data is properly anonymized and that workers have control over their own data, including the right to access, correct and delete their information.

IV. Unions should work on protecting workers' privacy, maintaining their dignity and reducing the risk of misuse of personal information.

3 Involve workers and their representatives in the development and deployment of AI systems

I. Government and employers should ensure that AI systems are designed with all workers' needs and concerns in mind, considering gender and intersectional inequalities and leading to human-centred approach and implementation.

II. Employers and unions should create joint committees or working groups that include trade unions and AI developers to collaboratively design and implement AI systems at work to ensure the workers' feedback is actively sought and incorporated.

2. Quality jobs, skills, skilling and reskilling

Challenge

- **Job displacement and quality of job**: The rise of AI and automation can lead to job displacement, particularly in roles that involve repetitive and manual tasks. This can result in a decrease in the availability of quality jobs, as many jobs and positions are expected to be replaced by AI technologies. Workers may face unemployment or be forced to accept lower-quality jobs with precarious working condition due to workplace renovation or relocation caused by AI technologies.
- **Skills gap and mismatch**: The rapid advancement of AI technologies creates a significant skills gap. Many workers may find that their current skills are no longer relevant, and there is a mismatch between the skills they possess and those required for new roles and tasks. The skills gap can hinder workers' ability to transition to new jobs, leading to prolonged periods of unemployment or underemployment. This also has a disproportionate impact on workers' employability, especially in low-income countries young workers and women may also be unproportionally affected.
- **Access to skilling and reskilling opportunities**: Access to effective skilling and reskilling programmes is often limited, particularly for workers in lower-income brackets or those in remote areas. Additionally, the cost and time required for training can be prohibitive. Women have globally less access to these programmes due existing gender-based inequalities. Without adequate access to training, many workers may struggle to acquire the necessary skills to remain fair and stable in their careers, exacerbating inequality and limiting career advancement opportunities.

Opportunities

- **Creation of new jobs and roles**: The integration of AI and automation in industries can lead to the creation of new jobs and roles that didn't exist before. Workers can transition into new jobs and roles such as AI maintenance technicians, data analysts and automation specialists. These new positions often come with higher pay and better working conditions, enhancing job quality.
- **Enhanced learning and development**: AI can facilitate personalized learning and development programmes tailored to individual workers' needs and career goals. Workers can benefit from targeted skilling and reskilling opportunities, making it easier to acquire new skills, stay relevant and adapt to technological changes and advance in their careers.
- **Improved work efficiency and safety**: AI can optimize workflows and improve safety in industrial settings by predicting and preventing accidents. Workers can experience a safer work environment and more efficient processes, reducing the risk of injuries and increasing overall productivity, leading to a more sustainable workplace.

2.

Our policy and demands

1 Ensure that workers can adapt to technological changes which lead to better job security

I. Governments and employers should establish lifelong learning funds and programmes that provide continuous education and training opportunities including AI literacy for all workers. The programmes should also provide more inclusive opportunities for women's access to AI jobs in sciences technology engineering and mathematics (STEM).

II. Governments, employers and unions should work together to create accessible and affordable training programmes for all workers that focus on both upskilling and reskilling. These programmes should be developed to cater for the evolving needs of the industries and include both technical and soft skills.

2 Foster public-private partnerships to develop and implement skills development initiatives

I. Governments, employers, educational institutions and unions should work together to create training programmes that align with the industries' needs. These partnerships should also provide funding and resources for apprenticeships, internships and on-the-job training.

II. Employers and unions should develop a Just Transition scheme where workers gain relevant skills that enhance their employability and meet the demands of the future of work.

3 Develop and implement Just Transition policies and programs

I. Governments and employers should establish a Just Transition programme which provides finance and income inclusive and tailored assistance, career counselling and career path services to the workers affected by AI and automation. This should include unemployment benefits, social plans, relocation assistance and incentives for companies to hire and train displaced workers.

II. Government, employers and unions should actively incorporate the opinions of young people who will shape the future of work and continuously develop the programme for a Just Transition in the AI era.

III. Unions should develop a Just Transition plan to support workers to navigate the transition period, reducing the negative impact of job displacement and ensuring new employment opportunities, including gender transformative transition.

3. Occupational health and safety

Challenges

- **Physical risks from robots and AI interaction**: The integration of robots and AI systems in industrial settings can introduce new physical risks including further acceleration and intensification of work. Workers may face hazards from working alongside robots, such as accidental collisions or malfunctions. Ensuring the safety of AI driven robot interactions requires robust safety protocols and continuous monitoring to prevent accidents.
- **Psychosocial burdens**: The use of AI for monitoring and managing workers can lead to increased stress and anxiety. Workers may feel constant pressure from being monitored, leading to mental health issues such as burnout and decreased job satisfaction. This can create a challenging work environment, affecting overall work-life.
- **Job insecurity and fear of automation**: The fear of job loss due to automation can create significant stress among workers. The uncertainty about job security can lead to decreased morale and a sense of instability, potentially leading to lower work efficiency and higher turnover rates.
- **Biased health and safety mechanism**: If health and safety mechanisms at the workplace use AI systems trained on partial or biased data, such as gender biased data, this could generate health and safety risks for workers not fitting with these data.

Opportunities

- **Enhanced hazard detection and prevention**: AI technologies can significantly improve the detection and prevention of workplace hazards. AI can analyse vast amounts of data in real-time to identify potential safety risks, such as equipment malfunctions or unsafe working conditions, before they lead to accidents.
- **Improved ergonomics and worker support**: AI can be used to design ergonomic solutions and provide support for workers, especially those with physical limitations or disabilities. AI-driven tools and wearable devices can guide workers' movements and provide feedback to prevent strain and injuries. Additionally, AI-driven collaborative robots (Cobots) can assist with physically demanding tasks, reducing the risk of musculoskeletal disorders and enhancing overall worker well-being.
- **Personalized health and safety training**: AI can deliver personalized health and safety training programmes tailored to individual workers' needs and job roles. By using AI to assess workers' knowledge and skills, training programs can be customized to address specific gaps and reinforce critical safety practices. This targeted approach ensures that workers receive the most relevant and effective training, leading to a safer and more knowledgeable workplace.

3.

Our policy and demands

1 Develop and enforce comprehensive AI-related safety standards for all workplaces

I. Governments should establish comprehensive regulations and guidelines for the safe design, installation and operation of robots and AI systems. This includes regular safety training, safety audits, real-time monitoring and emergency stop the operation driven by AI systems.

II. Governments should place appropriate numbers of labour inspectors who verify that AI systems in each workplace comply with labour laws and regulations, including those related to working hours and workplace safety.

III. Employers and unions (or joint health and safety committees) should jointly conduct proper AI risk assessments at work and develop AI-related occupational health and safety standards to ensure a safe work environment for all workers.

IV. Employers and unions should ensure the AI systems used in OHS risk management, such as in hazard detection, are gender responsive and not trained on biased data.

V. Unions should make sure that three fundamental workers' rights (the right to know, the right to refuse unsafe work, the right to participate in decision making) in health and safety are fully secured at all workplaces.

2 Integrate mental health support into occupational health and safety programmes

I. Governments and employers should provide the workers access to mental health resources, such as counselling services and stress management programmes.

II. Employers and Unions should integrate mental health support into occupational health and safety programmes to reduce stress and anxiety related to AI surveillance or systems, improving work-life balance.

3 Establish guidelines for the ethical use of AI in workplace to prevent OHS accidents

I. Employers should establish policies or guidelines that limit excessive monitoring and ensure that AI systems are used ethically, without infringing on workers' privacy and safety.

II. Unions should get involved in the process of development and deployment of the ethical use of AI and build trust between workers and employers, ensuring that AI enhances rather than undermines occupational health and safety.

4. Redistribution of wealth and productivity

Challenges

- **Widening income inequality**: AI and automation can lead to significant productivity gains, but these benefits are often unfairly or unevenly distributed. The increased efficiency and profits tend to mainly bring benefit to business owners, while the majority of workers may see little to no benefit. This can widen existing income inequalities with a growing gap among workers in different occupations, including the gender pay gap.
- **Concentration of market power**: AI can lead to the concentration of market power in the hands of a few large companies that can afford to invest in and develop these technologies. This concentration can stifle competition and innovation, leading to fewer opportunities for smaller businesses and workers, impacting existing labour market. It can also result in monopolistic practices that further skew wealth distribution.
- **Job polarization**: AI and automation can lead to job polarization, where there is a growing divide between high-skill, high-wage jobs and low-skill, low-wage jobs, with a shrinking middle class. This polarization can limit upward mobility for many workers, trapping them in low-wage positions with limited prospects for advancement.

Opportunities

- **Increased productivity and wage growth**: AI can significantly boost productivity by automating repetitive tasks and optimizing processes. This increased productivity can lead to higher profits for companies, which can result in wage growth for workers if the profits are fairly distributed.
- **Creation of high-value jobs**: The implementation of AI can create new high-value job roles that require advanced skills and offer better pay and working conditions. Workers can transition into positions that not only provide higher wages and better working conditions but also offer opportunities for professional development. High-value jobs can help counteract the shortage of skilled workers and increase job security.
- **Enhanced profit-sharing and equity schemes**: Companies and unions (or the workers' representatives) can implement profit-sharing and equity programs to ensure that workers benefit directly from the financial gains achieved through AI-driven productivity improvements through collective bargaining. Such schemes can help reduce income inequality by providing workers with a share of the profits, fostering investments in people.

4.

Our policy and demands

1 Implement profit-sharing and equity schemes that allow workers to benefit directly from the financial gains achieved through AI-driven productivity improvements

I. Employers should be transparent on the AI-driven productivity data and fairly allocate a portion of their profits to be reflected in the wage growth among the workers.

II. Employers and unions (or the workers' representatives) should negotiate to implement profit-sharing and equity schemes to ensure that workers benefit directly from the financial gains achieved through AI-driven productivity improvements through collective bargaining.

III. Unions should ensure that the AI-driven profits of the company reduce income inequality, including the gender pay gap and foster investments in people for the future of work.

2 Advocate for progressive taxation policies that ensure fairer distribution of wealth in the era of AI-automated economy

I. Governments should implement or strengthen progressive taxation policies/systems that ensure fairer distribution of wealth from the benefits, especially the capital gains derived from AI driven investment and automation technologies. This will contribute a larger share of the taxes which can be used for funding just transition programs such as social programs, public services, education and re-skilling/up-skilling programs for the workers affected by AI.

II. Governments, employers and unions should foster social dialogue on labour market reformation and qualification policies with fairer taxation systems which enables the creation of new decent jobs with decent wages for each job lost by AI.

3 Explore a policy to expand social safety nets that meet the basic needs and income regardless of employment status

I. Governments should explore a policy to introduce new or expand existing social safety nets to provide financial stability for workers in an increasingly AI-automated economy. The social safety nets should ensure that basic needs and income are met regardless of employment status. Unions should develop their positions to actively get involved in the discussion on robust social safety nets that can mitigate the economic impact of job displacement due to AI and automation, ensuring that all workers have a safety net to fall back on.

5. Workers' rights, organizing and collective bargaining

Challenges

- **Erosion of collective bargaining power**: The rise of AI and automation can weaken the bargaining power of workers and unions. As companies increasingly rely on technology, the traditional leverage of labour, such as strikes, may become less effective. This can lead to a decline in the ability of workers to negotiate for better wages, benefits, and working conditions.
- **Surveillance and privacy concerns**: AI used for monitoring and managing workers can lead to increased surveillance, raising significant privacy concerns. This can create a climate of fear and mistrust, making it more difficult for workers to organize and advocate for their rights. Excessive surveillance can deter workers from participating in union activities and can be used to target and retaliate against those who do.
- **Legal and regulatory barriers**: Existing labour laws and regulations may not adequately address the challenges posed by AI and automation. This can include a lack of protections for workers' rights to organize and bargain collectively in the context of new technologies. Without updated legal frameworks, workers may find it increasingly difficult to secure their fundamental workers' rights and protections in the AI-implemented workplaces.

Opportunities

- **Enhanced bargaining power through data**: AI can provide unions with valuable data and insights to strengthen their bargaining positions. By analysing data on productivity, wages, and working conditions, unions can make more informed arguments during negotiations. This data-driven approach can help secure better wages, benefits and working conditions for workers.
- **Improved communication and coordination**: AI-powered tools can enhance communication and coordination among union members. Platforms that use AI to facilitate real-time communication and collaboration can help unions organize more effectively. This can lead to stronger solidarity and more coordinated efforts in advocating for workers' rights, including reaching out unorganized workers.
- **Proactive identification of issues**: AI can help unions proactively identify and address workplace issues before they escalate. By monitoring workplace conditions and employee feedback, AI systems can alert unions to potential problems such as safety hazards or unfair practices. This allows unions to intervene early and advocate for necessary changes, improving overall workplace conditions.

5.

Our policy and demands

1 Strengthen legal protections for collective bargaining

I. Governments should update and strengthen labour laws to ensure robust protections for collective bargaining rights in the context of AI and digitalization. This includes ensuring the fundamental workers' rights at work, especially the right to organize, form unions and engage in collective bargaining without fear of retaliation.

II. Unions should develop and strengthen legal protections on the workers' rights to organize and collective bargaining, ensuring that unions can effectively advocate for fair wages, benefits and working conditions in the AI economy.

2 Promote social dialogue and worker involvement in the implementation of AI

I. Governments should mandate transparency and worker involvement in the development and deployment of AI technologies in the industries and workplaces.

II. Employers should involve unions or the workers representatives in the decision-making process regarding the implementation of AI technologies.

III. Unions should demand social dialogue on structural change and employment that are properly constituted and funded for a just and job-rich transition, fostering trust and collaboration between the governments, the employers and the unions in the AI transition era. The social dialogue should also address ensuring workers' rights and equitable distribution of AI benefits.

3 Enhance training and support for union representatives

I. Unions should provide training and resources to union representatives to help them effectively negotiate in an AI-implemented workplace. They should be able to fully understand the benefits and risks of AI technologies. This training should address the risks of bias as a factor of discrimination. Union representatives should also be trained on the issues of bias and gender discrimination, based on concrete examples. The training programmes should also include skills needs, data privacy, algorithmic management and ethical use of AI.

II. Union representatives should be trained to better advocate for workers' rights and ensure that AI technologies are implemented in ways that benefit the equally to all workforce men, women and gender diverse workers.

6. Recommendations for trade unions at different levels

The common challenges arise from fragmented governance and inadequate enforcement of labour regulations concerning AI, which often struggle to keep pace with rapid technological innovation. While uneven AI adoption and resource disparities are aggravating imbalances of power between the haves and the have-nots at different levels, trade unions often find themselves excluded from the policy-making and strategic decisions around AI in industry or public policy. Additionally, social dislocation and growing inequalities pose a major risk, as AI and algorithmic management can increase job insecurity of industrial workers and even exacerbate discrimination, including gender-based discrimination.

A heightened workplace surveillance by AI may jeopardize not only the dignity of workers but also fundamental workers' rights at work. AI can be used for predictive analytics to identify mobilization patterns, single out union activists and carry out retaliatory actions (targeted dismissals, disciplinary sanctions, harassment), thus discouraging unionization. Trade unions should review its outdated activities if necessary and upgrade the tactics to defend the workers' rights, especially the freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining and promote decent work for all in such era of AI.

Despite these challenges, significant opportunities exist to ensure that AI serves as an asset that bolsters unionization and creates counterpower. Data analytics and digital communication tools can help unions better target organizing campaigns, identify specific issues that workers face and provide tailored responses. Unions can also automate some administrative or logistical tasks, freeing them up to focus on on-the-ground organizing and member support. In this way, AI can make unions more efficient and responsive, including for a geographically scattered workforce or employees on irregular schedules.

International trade union coordination and solidarity, particularly between global north and south become even more crucial for demanding binding standards that protect trade union rights and regulate the use of AI. At every level, collective bargaining and social dialogue are key levers for insisting on algorithmic transparency, data protection and the equitable sharing of productivity gains from AI and automation. Due diligence and corporate social responsibility mechanisms can also compel multinational companies to uphold fundamental workers' rights throughout their supply chains. If AI is adequately regulated, it can improve health and safety at work, contribute to gender equality, foster skills development and strengthen job quality, provided it aligns with a Just Transition framework and expanded union membership.

1 International level

I. **Develop global standards for AI**: Engage and influence with international bodies such as ILO and OECD to develop global standards for AI implementation that promote and protect workers' rights, including gender equality.

II. **Alliance with global union federations (GUFs)**: Alliances with GUFs are essential for pooling resources, mounting large-scale campaigns, pressing for fair distribution of wealth, democratic AI governance and broadening the scope of due diligence obligations, including the protection of trade union rights.

III. **Advocacy for fair AI governance**: Advocate for fair and transparent AI governance frameworks that consider the interests of workers globally. This includes agreements with multinationals like global framework agreements. These agreements should also include monitoring mechanisms, ensuring the workers' rights and seek redress in the event of violations.

IV. **Global research and monitoring initiatives**: Support and participate in international research and monitoring initiatives to understand AI's impact on labour markets and human rights due diligence, considering gender based and intersectional inequalities and develop best practices.

V. **Training programmes and organizing projects for trade unions**: Develop and offer targeted AI trainings and various organizing projects which include sharing best practices between the unions. This is also important to develop common strategies to organize transnational membership recruitment campaigns throughout the supply chain of multinationals impacted by AI.

6.

2 Sectoral level

I. **Social dialogue at sector level**: There is a need to establish social dialogue at the sectoral level where governments, employers, and trade unions jointly analyse and forecast the jobs and skills required for AI development in each sector, supported by the collection of gender-disaggregated data. This dialogue should also include medium-sized and smaller businesses within the sector to ensure that no one is left behind.

II. **Sector-specific agreements**: Negotiate sector-specific agreements with employers and industry bodies to ensure that AI technologies are implemented responsibly. This requires uniting unions from different countries in the same industry, making it possible to strengthen bargaining power and prevent employers from exploiting competition among sites to undermine union action.

III. **Skills development initiatives**: Develop sector-specific training programmes to equip workers with the skills needed in an AI-enhanced work environment. These programmes should help workers build competencies related to AI, such as robot maintenance and data analytics. Such upskilling can strengthen career prospects and serve as a bargaining tool for expanding trade union presence by offering practical, targeted training proposals to the workforce.

IV. **Monitoring and assessment**: Establish gender-balances sectoral labour-management committees to monitor AI implementation and its impact on workers, ensuring compliance with agreed-upon standards in the sector.

V. **Organizing throughout the sector**: Develop organizing strategies to increase union membership across the entire value chains is a top priority. Targeted recruitment initiatives, complemented by international solidarity and activist training, will build strong, coordinated and inclusive unions capable of overseeing and shaping how AI is used at each point in the production chain.

3 National level

I. **National policy advocacy**: Engage with national governments to develop comprehensive AI policies and regulations that include protection of workers' rights, prohibition of any the use of discriminatory AI systems, re-skilling/up-skilling training programs, robust labour inspection and social safety nets.

II. **Full participation in decision making bodies**: Trade unions should be fully involved in designing and implementing AI policies and strategies. This ensures that job creation, social justice and sustainable development objectives are not sacrificed for short-term profits.

III. **Social dialogue and tripartite partnerships**: Demand social dialogue to ensure sustainable industrial jobs and decent work for the future. This can include the formation of tripartite partnerships (unions, employers, government) to address the impact of AI on the workforce and create inclusive policies.

IV. **Public awareness campaigns**: Conduct national campaigns to raise awareness about the impacts of AI and advocate for worker-centric policies.

V. **Cross sector union solidarity**: Develop cross sector union solidarity and remove barriers to unionization in different sectors as collective bargaining should be extended to all workers exposed to AI-driven changes, regardless of employment status. Moreover, union consolidation (union building) requires mobilization across the entire labour movement, creating recruiting networks and assisting new members.

Conclusion

AI continues to reshape industrial workplaces at breakneck speed, bringing both risks and opportunities for workers. AI can become either a catalyst for worker empowerment or a driver of social regression and union repression. By actively engaging in the processes of AI development, deployment and regulation, trade unions are better placed to safeguard workers' rights and ensure that the benefits of technological advancements are shared equitably. This engagement calls for strong international coordination, since multinational corporations operate across multiple jurisdictions and exploit global supply chains to bypass labour protections.

IndustriALL Global Union has a pivotal role to play in strengthening cross-border solidarity and supporting unions with limited resources, enabling them to participate effectively in discussions about industrial policy, social protection and AI governance. Through proactive social dialogue, collective bargaining and robust policy interventions, unions can champion a truly transformative approach—one that promotes democratic oversight over AI, investment in worker-centred technologies and the redistribution of wealth derived from increased productivity. Furthermore, the conditions under which AI is developed and deployed are shaped by broader industrial policy choices. Public research agendas, data centre investments and innovation incentives can determine whether AI primarily serves short-term corporate profit or genuinely benefits workers and communities. By insisting on meaningful union involvement in defining and overseeing industrial policy frameworks, trade unions can help ensure that AI development is transparent and guided by the needs of society at large. Such democratic participation, combined with robust social dialogue, can bridge the gap between technology leaders and less advanced companies, foster new worker-focused business models and safeguard the long-term viability of industries and jobs.

The rise of AI presents not only social and economic challenges but also major environmental concerns that require increased vigilance from trade unions and workers. The carbon footprint of data centres, excessive energy consumption, depletion of natural resources for IT infrastructure and massive water usage for server cooling are all issues that should be considered in the regulation and oversight of AI. While AI has the potential to improve working conditions and optimize industrial processes, its unregulated development also risks exacerbating environmental impacts by enabling unsustainable production models, reinforcing algorithmic greenwashing practices and deepening inequalities in access to essential resources. Social dialogue and international cooperation play a key role in ensuring that AI does not become an additional driver of accelerating climate and ecological crises, but rather a lever for a fair and balanced transition. Trade unions should also be fully involved in AI governance to prevent this technology from becoming yet another tool for uncontrolled exploitation, both socially and environmentally.

Ongoing monitoring and adaptation are vital as AI technology evolves rapidly. Unions should maintain constant vigilance and use every tool, from sectoral and national agreements to global framework agreements, to guarantee that AI does not undermine decent work or exacerbate existing inequalities. Ensuring union representation, social justice, and fair labour standards should remain the guiding principles in shaping the future of industrial work. Ultimately, growing union membership, demanding transparency in automated systems and challenging any abusive use of technology are all essential to ensure that AI supports dignity and justice on the job. By coordinating efforts at the international, sectoral and national levels, and by reinforcing their presence throughout companies and supply chains, trade unions can more effectively shape technological and organizational choices. Only a large, well-organized and determined trade union force can transform AI into a genuine opportunity for workers rather than a threat to their fundamental rights. If guided by solidarity and strong worker participation, AI can indeed become a catalyst for an inclusive, fair and sustainable industrial economy; one that respects human dignity and leaves no worker behind.

For more information, please contact

info@industriall-union.org

www.industriall-union.org

industri all
global union