

TransFormWork II – Final Conference

From Social Dialogue to Action: Pathways to a Fair Digital and AI Transition

Sofia, Bulgaria – 27/03/2026

Report prepared by Nicole Sciberras Bray, Policy Executive, The Malta Chamber

The Malta Chamber took part in the final conference of the TransFormWork 2 project, organised by the Confederation of Independent Trade Unions in Bulgaria (CITUB) in Sofia, Bulgaria. The project focused on managing the impact of AI and algorithmic management on the future of work. It addressed employment concerns, identified mechanisms for anticipating skills required, and promoted the upskilling and reskilling of workers. The project sought to raise awareness of how, through proper strategies and human oversight, AI can benefit employers and workers by creating new job opportunities, organising work differently, and improving working conditions.

This final conference marked the end of a two-year collaboration among the project partners, resulting in a range of initiatives and deliverables including:

- Three European Roundtables where the project partners discussed and analysed ongoing challenges related to the use of AI at work;
- Seven National Roundtables in each partner country, where national stakeholders had the opportunity to discuss challenges and changes related to AI in the workplace;
- Seven national reports (one per country) which examined national strategies, legislation, AI adoption by enterprises, social dialogue, and survey results from employers' and employees' representatives;
- A comparative report of the seven national reports;
- A report featuring case studies from each country illustrating how AI is introduced at company level; and
- Policy recommendations agreed upon by all project partners.

Main outcomes from the conference

The final conference was not only an opportunity for the project partners to showcase the work and findings of the project, but an opportunity to provide delegates with insights on the future of work with AI. AI is becoming an integral part of our daily lives. The transition pathway depends on strong social dialogue. AI is progressing rapidly and transforming workplaces, and while it promotes greater innovation and efficiency, concerns have been raised with regards to workers' privacy, equality, and data protection. Focus should be directed towards strengthened collective bargaining and the training and re-skilling of workers on AI. The discussion also highlighted the crucial role of transparency, and the presence of humans in the initial and final use of AI. That is, ethical considerations are vital.

AI in the workplace has become characterised by two conflicting perspectives. While AI is viewed positively for automating repetitive tasks and increasing productivity, it has also been perceived negatively due to the increased reliance that has been placed on it. It was stated that through AI, manual tasks have become more efficient. Adaptability is a key factor in the way forward with the use of AI.

1. Panel 1: Social Dialogue for Fair Digital and AI Transition: Navigating Risks, Opportunities, Challenges

During this panel emphasis was made on the importance of managing regulation and social dialogue, whilst focusing on the human-in-control principle. Training and skilling are essential for the effective implementation of AI as knowledge amongst workers contributes to effectiveness and resilience. A fair, inclusive, and forward-looking approach is necessary to ensure competitiveness, as well as the protection of workers. Furthermore, key factors highlighted include demographic ageing, the relationship between productivity and competitiveness, and the gap between Europe and other global players. Often, discussions on the use of AI at work emphasise concerns about AI use rather than the opportunities it offers. Hence, the question arises on how modern employment and the modern economy may evolve together. A balance must be struck between safeguarding workers and enabling AI adoption by companies.

2. TransFormWork 2 – key findings, comparative insights, key lessons

The project focused on a diverse range of sectors including Education, Financial Services, Health Services, Industrial Production, and News Media. The comparative report, one of the main deliverables of the project, outlines the findings of each partner for each of the aforementioned sectors and lists relevant EU legislations and policies relating to the use and regulation of AI at work.

The key findings as outlined within the comparative report were divided into the following subsections:

- Penetration of AI and algorithmic management
- Social dialogue and collective bargaining
- Human-in-Control principle
- Training and reskilling
- Employee monitoring and surveillance
- Awareness of new EU Legislation
- Generational and enterprise-size divide

3. Panel 2: National Realities – Challenges, Best Practices, and Social Dialogue in Managing AI

During this session, a representative from each partner country discussed the key findings outlined within their national reports. Each partner country focused on one particular sector and also discussed the current situation within their jurisdiction with regards to digitisation, AI systems and technological transformation through an overview of legislations, country positions, and government strategies. More information can be found in the comparative report.

4. Panel 3 – The Future of Work in the Digital Era: Safeguarding Quality Jobs

This panel was moderated by Ms Rachel Bondi Attard, Head of Media and Communications Strategist at The Malta Chamber. She introduced the session on the future of work in the digital era, emphasising that AI is no longer merely a buzzword but a concrete reality. She urged moving beyond discussion towards swift, practical action, warning that without agility, innovation, and cohesive policies, Europe risks falling behind internationally.

An ILO representative discussed AI's uneven impact on employment across different demographics and regions, introducing an index of occupational AI exposure, identifying jobs vulnerable or likely to be enhanced by AI. About 25% of global employment faces AI threats. Exposure is highest in highly

educated, cognitive jobs, challenging the idea that AI mainly affects low-skilled work. Access to digital infrastructure is crucial, and AI outcomes depend on policy choices, institutions, and protections.

A representative from EU-OHSA presented findings from the European Survey of Enterprises on New and Emerging Risks (ESENER), focusing on the impact of digitalisation on occupational health and safety (OSH), rather than productivity or jobs. Data from a ranging number of workplaces across Europe indicates a drastic increase in remote working between 2019 and 2024, driven by the Covid-19 Pandemic. Key findings highlight risks such as prolonged sitting, increased work intensity, and information overload related to digital technology. The discussion also emphasised that digitalisation is outpacing risk prevention, highlighting the need for improved OSH integration, workplace dialogue, and training.

The third intervention focused on the “job apocalypse” caused by rapid AI growth, stating that AI is advancing faster than previous technologies and already impacting the labour market. Although AI may create more jobs overall, displacement is immediate, uneven, and may have implications on white-collar and entry-level roles. Emphasis was made on the importance of adaptation for workers, firms, and policymakers and that developments should be embraced rather than resisted. The final intervention focused on the EU AI Act, highlighting its core principles like human oversight, transparency, and data protection. It was added that AI regulation complements existing laws but adds complexity.

5. Panel 4 - EU Frameworks in Action – Navigating the AI Act, Platform Work Directive – Is There a Path to Ethical AI in Europe

Ethical AI must be grounded in principles, accountability, and transparency. Collective bargaining is a mechanism that can help establish ethical guidelines. Training in AI tools should be accessible to everyone within the workforce, underlining that factchecking is vital when using AI.

The conference concluded with a brief presentation by the Project Chief Researcher, who outlined the most notable findings of the comparative report, highlighting the number of individuals involved in this project and encouraged partners to discuss potential further initiatives.

FINAL CONFERENCE

From Social Dialogue to Action: Pathways to a Fair Digital and AI Transition

27 March 2026; 09:30 – 17.00

Globe Congress Centre, Europe Hall, 1 Macedonia Sq., 1040 Sofia, Bulgaria

Agenda

- 09.00 **Registration and welcome coffee**
- 09.30 **Welcome and Opening of the Conference**
Plamen Dimitrov – President of CITUB
*Lyuboslav Kostov – Director, Institute for Social and Trade Union Research,
Education and Training (ISTURET)*
Maria Mincheva, Vice-President, Bulgarian Industrial Association
*Boyan Mitrakiev, Executive Director. Confederation of the Employers and
Industrialists in Bulgaria*
- 10:00 **Keynote speech: The Road to Ethical Digitisation at Work**
Ivaylo Kalfin, Executive Director, EUROFOUND
- 10.15 **Panel 1: Social Dialogue for Fair Digital and AI Transition: Navigating Risks,
Opportunities, Challenges**
Chair: *Ina Atanasova, Manager of the project, CITUB*
Claes-Mikael Stahl, Deputy General Secretary, ETUC (online)
Thérèse Liedekerke, Deputy Director General, BusinessEurope (online)
*Maria Luisa Cabral, Director for Quality Jobs, Working Conditions and Social
Dialogue, Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion DG, European Commission)*
(online)

11.00 **TransFormWork 2 – key findings, comparative insights, key lessons**

Ina Atanasova, Manager of the project, CITUB

11:15 Coffee break

11:30 **Panel 2: National Realities – Challenges, Best Practices, and Social Dialogue in Managing AI**

Chair: *Monica Ceremigna, Policy officer, CGIL, Italy*

Panellists

Rositsa Makelova, ISTURET/CITUB, Bulgaria

Frank Vaughan, SIPTU, Ireland

Eliana Como – Fondazione “Giuseppe Di Vittorio”, Italy

Evangelos Evangelou – SEK, Cyprus

Andrzej Zybała – Warsaw School of Economics (SGH) Poland

Gabriel Zvîncă - Concordia Employers’ Confederation, Romania

Fabio Bajada – The Malta Chamber

13.00 Lunch break

14:00 **Panel 3 – The Future of Work in the Digital Era: Safeguarding Quality Jobs**

Chair: *Rachel Bondi Attard, Head of Media and Communication Strategies, The Malta Chamber*

Panellists:

Paweł Gmyrek, Senior Researcher, ILO

Xabier Irastorza, Senior Research Project Manager, EU-OSHA

Alexiei Dingli, Professor of Artificial Intelligence, Faculty of ICT at the University of Malta

Felicia Roşioru, Associate Professor of Labour Law and EU Employment Law, Babes-Bolyai University, Romania

15:00 Coffee break

15.30 **Panel 4 - EU Frameworks in Action – Navigating the AI Act, Platform Work Directive – Is There a Path to Ethical AI in Europe.**

Chair: *Velichka Mikova, National Secretary, CITUB*

Panellists:

Maria Mincheva, vice-president, BIA

Deyan Blagoev, member of the managing board of AI Cluster Bulgaria

Andreas Matsas, General Secretary, SEK

16:30 **Discussion, Key messages and recommendations and Charting the Path Forward**

Kevin P O’Kelly, Project external expert

17:00 End of the conference