

## Harnessing A.I. for the benefit of people and planet

Artificial Intelligence – two words on many a lip. And rightly so. A.I., machine-learning, autonomous and intelligent systems are making their way into every aspect of our lives. Determining increasingly the news we read, the services we are offered, the prices of goods and possibly soon the jobs we get offered, or the one that we lose.

These systems are feeding off the data we maybe too willingly are giving away. From the use of our GPS, to phone calls to our banks, the apps we use on our smart phones, the purchases we make with our credit cards, the health files labelled to our names, the friends and connections we have, the likes we give and those we don't, the dashcam's that unbeknownst to ourselves are catching our whereabouts, to the fitbits that track our every breath, sleep pattern and move.

We are under surveillance to a degree hitherto unforeseen.

This data is used to profile each and every one of us. Our digital selves exist in many aspects without our knowledge, yet they are used to influence our opinions and opportunities. In relation to the world of work, data, A.I. and algorithms are already in use in many companies. Also known as Management-by-Algorithm, autonomous systems are used by HR in deciding who to hire, fire, discipline or promote. Although the GDPR has given us sound rights and protections against the misuse of our personal data, the surveillance of workers is nonetheless on the rise.

We simply must take a moment and ask ourselves what the long-term consequences of all of this are. Will you not get a job because of your health file? Your friends' profile? Your union membership or the data derived from measuring your productivity, whereabouts, movements and mood?

Although these questions hint to a range of potentially negative scenarios, they need to be asked. And we need to answer. All future scenarios are currently possible: from the robots taking full control, to the majority of jobs being lost in the eternal search for productivity gains, to the more positive situation where we learn to harness these technologies to help solve some of our greatest social, economic and environmental challenges. What future awaits us, is in no way inevitable, but it will depend on us urgently asking one fundamental question: What society do we want? And then we need to seek bold, sometimes new and courageous, regulatory and behavioural changes to make that vision possible.

### 10 principles for ethics in AI

In relation to the future world of work, UNI Global Union has asked this question, and we have laid our [10 key principles](#) for the framing of A.I. In brief, these are:

#### 1. AI systems must be transparent

- i) Including that workers must have the right to demand transparency in the decisions/outcomes of AI systems and the underlying algorithms, and workers must be consulted on AI systems' implementation, development and deployment

#### 2. AI systems must be equipped with an "ethical black box"

- ii) The ethical black box should not only contain relevant data to ensure transparency and accountability of a system, but also include clear data and information on the ethical considerations built into said system.

### **3. AI must serve people and planet**

- iii) Through codes of good ethical practice for the development, application and use of AI A.I. systems remain compatible with, and promote, fundamental human rights and the principles of human dignity, integrity, freedom, privacy and cultural and gender diversity.

### **4. Adopt a human-in-command approach**

- iv) An absolute precondition is that the development of AI must be responsible, safe and useful, where machines maintain the legal status of tools, and legal persons retain control over, and responsibility for, these machines *at all times*.

### **5. Ensure a genderless, unbiased AI**

- v) In the design and maintenance of AI and autonomous systems, it is vital that the system is controlled for negative or harmful human-bias, and that any bias – be it gender, race, sexual orientation, age - are identified, and not propagated by the system.

### **6. Share the benefits of AI systems**

- vi) The economic prosperity created by AI should be distributed broadly and equally to the benefit of all of humanity. Global as well as national policies aimed at bridging the economic, technological and social digital divide are therefore necessary.

### **7. Secure a Just Transition and ensure support for fundamental freedoms and rights**

- vii) As AI systems develop and augmented realities formed, work will change. Some jobs will disappear entirely. It is vital that policies are put in place that ensure a just transition for effected workers, including specific governmental measures to help displaced workers find new employment.

### **8. Establish global governance mechanism**

- viii) UNI recommends the establishment of multi-stakeholder Decent Work and Ethical AI governance bodies on global and regional levels.

### **9. Ban the attribution of responsibility to robots**

- ix) Robots should be designed & operated as far as is practicable to comply with existing laws & fundamental rights & freedoms, including privacy.

### **10. Ban AI arms race**

- x) Lethal autonomous weapons, including cyber warfare, should be banned.

## **Call to Action**

There are no quick and easy solutions to creating a digital future that serves the majority and not just the few. UNI has consistently called for governments and businesses to rethink and realise that unions are part of the solution. Indeed, given the scope of change on our doorsteps, a sustainable future in which A.I. fosters peace, empowers humans and enhances their capabilities requires that we work constructively together. We must dare admit to systemic, institutional and market

shortcomings and failures, build on the positive synergies and together strive towards advancing well-being through inclusive and sustainable growth. We must commit to keeping people in work. We must have the courage to adapt our institutions to meet the new realities. And we must never accept flexibility at the expense of universal social security. Nothing less will do.