Call for tenders for subcontracting an expert for the ETUC project "ShapeTech"

This is a call for a subcontractor to provide expertise as part of the implementation of the ETUC project called "ShapeTech".

This call for tenders will be published on the ETUC website on Monday 26 January 2026 and will be kept online for 20 calendar days. Offers must be sent at the latest on Sunday 15 February 2026 to ETUC.

1. Background information on the project

The European economy is undergoing a profound transformation driven by two major forces: **the green and digital transitions**. This so-called **twin transition** aims to achieve climate neutrality while harnessing digital technologies to enhance productivity, efficiency, and innovation. While these transitions are expected to bring significant economic and environmental benefits, they also pose **major challenges for workers**. This project focuses on the **digital dimension** of the twin transition, particularly on the increasing use of **Artificial Intelligence (AI) systems** in the workplace. AI has the potential to reshape **labour markets, the nature of work, and corporate structures**, raising critical questions about job security, working conditions, and workers' rights. AI technologies are rapidly being integrated into workplaces, affecting jobs, tasks, and decision-making structures.

Expectations for how AI will transform the world of work include:

a) Labour markets

• AI is leading to **job reorganization** rather than outright job elimination. The OECD has shown that the main effect of AI adoption is **workplace restructuring**, with some roles becoming obsolete while new AI-related jobs emerge.

• Some studies suggest that **automation may replace a significant percentage of routine jobs**, especially in **manufacturing, finance, and administrative sectors**.

• AI is also expected to **increase demand for digital skills**, requiring **reskilling and upskilling initiatives** to ensure workers can adapt to AI-driven changes.

b) The nature of work

• AI has **simplified some decision-making processes**, but it has also increased **cognitive workload** for many employees.

• Tasks once performed collectively are now being automated, reducing formal teamwork, while informal cooperation often takes place outside working hours, leading to **invisible labour**.

• AI-assisted work raises concerns about **job autonomy**, with workers increasingly subordinated to algorithmic management systems that dictate work pace and performance.

• The risk of **dehumanization** is real, as AI systems tend to reduce employees to data points, making work feel more transactional.

c) Companies

• AI impacts corporate structures by **redefining job roles**, often requiring specific departments to be dedicated to **AI data input, system maintenance, and oversight**.

• Historical data shows that **major workplace reorganizations can lead to spikes in occupational accidents** (Askenazy, 2004).

• Rapid AI-driven transformations can lead to a **sense of inadequacy** among workers (Connink & Gollac, 2006), resulting in stress and resistance to change.

The risks of AI systems when poorly implemented

When AI systems are not properly managed, they can lead to significant risks:

• **Job displacement**: Workers fear losing their jobs to AI automation, as seen in various sector-specific studies.

• **Bias and discrimination**: AI systems can inherit biases from training data, leading to **historical, representation, measurement, and deployment biases** that reinforce inequalities.

• **Erosion of workers' rights**: AI-driven decisions, particularly in **hiring, performance evaluation, and contract termination**, risk reducing transparency and fairness.

• **Health & safety concerns**: AI-managed workplaces, such as Amazon warehouses, have shown **increased injury rates** due to **algorithmic work pacing**.

• **Lack of human oversight**: AI systems making **autonomous decisions** without human intervention can negatively impact job security and workplace well-being.

Legislative Framework and Gaps

There has been **some legislative progress** at the European level to support workers' involvement in digital transformation, including:

General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) & AI Act

- The **GDPR** provides workers with certain rights regarding AI-driven decision-making, but these provisions are not always enforced effectively.
- The **EU AI Act** introduces important **risk-based regulations for AI systems**, but does not include strong provisions for worker involvement in AI deployment at the company level.
- Despite these advances, **trade unions** and employee representatives have **limited formal influenc**e over AI implementation within companies.
- **Article 10 of the EU Platform Work Directive** includes the obligation to involve workers' representatives in AI-related decisions and the prohibition of fully automated decisions concerning contract suspensions, restrictions, or terminations—ensuring that human judgment prevails.

However, despite these positive steps, **workers are still largely excluded from AI decision-making** in practice. Many employees and their representatives are unaware of AI systems operating in their workplaces, and companies often bypass or delay **their legal responsibilities regarding worker consultation.**

To ensure AI benefits both companies and workers, it is crucial that employees are actively involved in the design, deployment, and monitoring of AI systems in the workplace. Workers must have a say in how AI systems are introduced and should be able to question and challenge AI-driven decisions. Companies must engage with trade unions and worker representatives to ensure AI aligns with **fundamental workers' rights.** Without worker participation, **AI deployment can undermine social dialogue and reduce trust between employers and employees.**

Given the lack of AI literacy among employees and worker representatives, there is an urgent need for training programs to help them understand AI's role and detect unannounced AI applications.

A **legal framework ensuring workers' right to information and consultation is necessary, particularly for transparency, risk assessment, and governance of AI systems**. Pilot testing and social dialogue should be prioritized to assess AI's workplace impact. **Collective bargaining agreements should address AI's implications on training, job security, and decision-making processes**. Independent auditing mechanisms and certification labels should ensure AI remains transparent, unbiased, and accountable. Workers should have clear avenues to challenge AI-driven decisions, including explanations of algorithmic choices, reversibility of outcomes, and oversight by human supervisors.

This project seeks to **empower workers** to actively participate in AI-related decisions, ensuring that AI serves as a tool for progress rather than a force of exclusion. By strengthening worker involvement, raising awareness, and promoting social dialogue, the project will contribute **to a fair and just digital transition in European workplaces.**

This project aims to address the lack of worker involvement in AI-driven workplace transformations by:

1. **Enhancing worker engagement at the company level in shaping AI implementation**.
2. **Raising awareness among workers** and their representatives about their rights and the presence of AI in their workplaces.
3. **Providing training and capacity-building to equip employees** with the knowledge to challenge unfair AI-driven decisions.
4. **Promoting compliance with EU law, ensuring companies meet their obligations regarding worker consultation in AI adoption,** including identifying legislative gaps affecting workers' information & consultation rights at company level.
5. **Supporting social dialogue to create a balanced, worker-inclusive approach to digital transformation.**

This project It combines **multi-level stakeholder engagement, sector-specific analysis, interactive capacity-building, and targeted dissemination** to equip workers with the necessary tools and knowledge to shape AI in their workplaces.

As AI affects different sectors in **varied and complex ways**, the project will take a **sector-specific approach**, analysing AI's role in:

• **Banking** (automated decision-making, customer profiling).
• **Manufacturing** (AI-driven automation, predictive maintenance).
• **Healthcare** (AI-assisted diagnostics, workflow optimization).
• **Transport & Logistics** (fleet management, worker surveillance).
• **Retail** (algorithmic scheduling, price-setting AI).

Steps of the project

1. **Establishing a Steering Committee**

A **Steering Committee** will be set up to ensure the project aligns with **real workplace challenges** and effectively reaches the company level through ETUFs. The committee will be composed of **ETUC project team**, **European Trade Union Federations (ETUFs), Experts (including the external expert and ETUI researchers).**

2. **Development of Key Guiding Documents**

A final research-based **guidance package** will be developed to **translate findings into action**. This will include:

1. **A step-by-step guide for worker representatives to develop training plans on AI literacy.**

2. A **checklist for collective agreements regarding AI**.
3. **A Research Report** summarizing **key findings, best practices, and legal insights**.

3. A Two-Day Event in Brussels: Capacity Building & Social Dialogue

A **major event will be held in Brussels** to train, engage, and empower worker representatives on AI-related challenges and solutions, bringing together trade unions, policymakers, AI and labour law experts, civil society, and leading employers. Employers who have negotiated collective agreements on AI, engaged in meaningful social dialogue, or implemented inclusive AI governance frameworks will contribute through workshops and panel discussions**.**
Day 1 will focus on hands-on training through 10 interactive workshops led by experts *(including the external expert who will be selected through this call)*, equipping participants with knowledge and tools to shape AI policies effectively and respond to sector-specific needs.
Day 2 will feature high-level panels with EU decision-makers to assess current EU laws (AI Act, GDPR, Platform Work Directive), explore how workers can use them, and identify gaps and next steps. This multi-stakeholder dialogue ensures workers' voices are heard in AI policymaking while strengthening trade union capacity and promoting the application of EU law.

4. Communication and Dissemination Strategy

Key activities include:
- **Publication of reports & guides** on ETUC and ETUF platforms.
- **Briefing sessions** for trade unions to present findings and strategies.
- **Targeted dissemination through newsletters, social media, and websites** to reach worker representatives and stakeholders.

2. Tasks to be performed by the subcontractor

The ETUC is seeking to subcontract external experts for the following two specific tasks:

A) *Researcher for Drafting the Step-by-Step Guide, the Checklist for AI-related Collective Agreements and the Final Research Report*

Objective:
The researcher will create a comprehensive **Step-by-Step Guide,** a **Checklist** for worker representatives (specifically focusing on AI-related collective agreements) and **the Final Research Report.**

Tasks:
o **Analysis**: Identify and analyse information & consultation references to AI in collective agreements and their practical use for worker representatives.
o **Rights Assessment**: Assess workers' rights to information and consultation in the context of AI integration at the workplace.
o **Best Practices**: Identify and document best practices in AI-related collective bargaining.
o **Sector-Specific Mapping**: Identify challenges specific to different sectors and how they affect AI implementation and workers' rights.
o **Stakeholder Engagement**: Establish contact with company-level worker representatives, conduct interviews to gather insights, and analyse the findings.
o **Literature Review**: Review relevant literature to support the development of practical resources.

o **Training and Policy Development**: Contribute to the development of training materials, policy guidance, and tools related to AI governance in the workplace, ensuring that workers are equipped to participate effectively in the shaping of AI-related policies and practices.

Key responsibilities and deliverables of the subcontractor :

1. A step-by-step guide for worker representatives to develop training plans on AI literacy
This Step-by-Step Guide will help worker representatives shape AI policies in the workplace by developing training plans for AI literacy at the company level. While existing resources from UNI Europa and AlgorithmWatch offer approaches for engaging with management on AI, they are often not fully implemented, and workers feel overwhelmed by AI's complexity. ETUI training has focused on enhancing worker representatives 'understanding of AI, but this guide will go further by providing concrete steps to design and implement AI training for workers within companies. It will serve as a practical tool to empower workers and ensure meaningful AI literacy in the workplace.

2. Checklist for collective agreements regarding AI
The Checklist for Collective Agreements regarding AI will compile best practice examples where AI and digitalization are addressed in collective agreements. Many agreements mention AI, but often in vague terms. This checklist will highlight how specific provisions can strengthen workers' rights, ensure transparency, and trigger meaningful information and consultation at the company level. By showcasing concrete clauses and their impact, the checklist will serve as a practical tool for worker representatives and trade unions to negotiate stronger AI-related protections. It will help shape collective agreements that empower workers in the evolving digital workplace and ensure fair AI governance.

3. Final Research Report
Whereas the other two deliverables under this WP concentrate on the practical use of key findings of this project, this research report will be a shortened document available online summarizing the academic work that has been done in order to produce the guiding documents. It shall contain the state of the art around the literature and the insights from the sectoral analyses. The goal is to have a state-of-the-art research report on the current regulatory framework and workplace AI trends.

All the deliverables have to be written in <u>*English and proofread*</u>*.*

Deadlines:
1. **A step-by-step guide for worker representatives to develop training plans on AI literacy**
   Draft version : Deadline: December 2026
   Final version : Deadline: February 2027

2. **Checklist for collective agreements regarding AI**
   Draft version : Deadline: December 2026
   Final version : Deadline: February 2027

3. **Final Research Report**
   Draft version : Deadline: December 2026
   Final version : Deadline: February 2027

B) Expert Speaker for Day 1 of the Event:

Objective:
The ETUC seeks expert speaker to contribute to Day 1 of an event, providing specialized input, training, and moderation for the workshops.

Tasks and Responsibilities:
o **Training and Input**: Deliver expert presentations or training sessions on relevant topics (see WP2), focusing on issues related to AI governance, labour rights, and collective agreements.
o **Moderation**: Lead and moderate the workshops, ensuring productive discussions and guiding participants through the topics at hand.
o **Engagement**: Facilitate discussions to ensure that all participants are involved and that relevant issues are explored in-depth.

Timeline:
The project has begun **on 1 January 2026 and will conclude on 30 June 2027**. The research that is subject of this call for tender must be fully completed **by Q1 2027**. The selection process will conclude by the end of February 2026. Exact dates of the Steering Committee meetings and of the 2-days event in Brussels will be confirmed later, based on the availability of participating ETUC team, expert and ETUC affiliates. Further details can be found under "*Deliverables & Deadlines*."

3. Expertise, experience and skills required

The selection procedure will consider the knowledge of the Trade Union environment and previous experience with the identified topics.

ETUC Project team will monitor the work of the selected expert to ensure the clarity of the tasks and their timely implementation.

Sound expertise is required on the following issues:
• Expert knowledge of workers' rights to information, consultation and participation, including in the context of digitalisation and AI deployment at workplace level;
• Proven experience in analysing collective agreements and extracting relevant provisions applicable to workplace practice;
• Strong understanding of AI governance in the workplace, including algorithmic management, monitoring technologies, and automated decision-making systems impacting workers;
• Demonstrated capacity to identify and document best practices in AI-related collective bargaining across sectors;
• Experience in qualitative research methods, including stakeholder engagement, interviews with worker representatives, and analysis of findings;
• Ability to map sector-specific challenges and assess their implications for workers' rights and the implementation of AI systems;
• Solid experience in drafting practical tools and deliverables, including step-by-step guides, checklists, policy guidance and training-related resources for worker representatives;
• Experience in working on European-level projects, including delivering high-quality outputs in line with timelines and reporting requirements;

• Understanding or experience in working with the European trade union movement. A sound network of trade unionists and workplace worker representatives will be highly appreciated.

Skills required:
- Proven research and presentation skills (in English);
- Ability to do desk research in multiple languages
- Proven skills in drafting policy analysis;
- Ability to work within specified deadlines and to respect budgetary limits;
- Ability to work in a multicultural context and understanding of different industrial relations systems, cultures & traditions;
- Good administration and project management skills.

4. Time schedule and reporting

The subcontractor will be asked to respect the timeline mentioned under point 2. The exact date of the 2-days event will be communicated at a later stage.

The subcontractor will also be asked to participate in the online Steering Committee meetings of the project, ETUC Committee on Workers Participation and Company Policy meetings, ETUC Ad-Hoc Working Group on AI, as well as the final 2 days- dissemination event. The dates will be discussed and decided together with the tenderer in the Steering Committee.

5. Payment

The total maximum budget available for the fees of the subcontractor is as follows:

Contract with ETUC	
Main activities and meetings	
A step-by-step guide for worker representatives to develop training plans on AI literacy (in English/proofread) **Checklist for collective agreements regarding AI (in English/proofread)** **Final Research Report (in English/proofread)** **Expert Speaker for Day 1 of the Final Dissemination Event** **Regular review meetings with ETUC project team and reporting on progress**	
Total budget for the Expertise	**35 000 € (VAT and all taxes included)**

The subcontractor will be remunerated in various instalments (advance and final payment). This amount covers the fees but does not include the travel and subsistence costs incurred for attending project meetings (such as Steering Committee meetings and ETUC Committee meetings when in-person). These will be covered by ETUC on the basis of EU rules & thresholds (see the EC table of maximum amounts per EU member state).

6. Selection criteria

The selection criteria are in particular:

- Verifiable expertise, experience and skills, as required and described in part 3 of this call;
- Quality of the methodology proposed in the offer;
- Proven track record of ensuring the quality of written materials produced, both in terms of content and format (i.e. previous publications), in the relevant subjects specified in this call for tenders;
- Price/Quality ratio;
- Previous research/work undertaken in the field of information, consultation & participation & general employment policies.

7. Form, structure and content of the tender

Tenders must be written in **English**. They must be signed by the tenderer or his/her duly authorised representative and be perfectly legible so that there can be no doubt as to words and figures. Tenders must be clear and concise and assembled in a coherent fashion.

Since tenderers will be judged on the content of their written bids, they must make it clear that they are able to meet the requirements of the specifications.

All tenders must include at least two sections:

i)   Technical proposal

The technical proposal must provide all the information needed for the purpose of awarding the contract, including:

- Specific information covering the technical and professional capacity, as required, in particular:
  - Description of relevant professional experience with emphasis on the specific fields covered by the invitation to tender;
  - Detailed curriculum vitae of tenderer and of the other team members if applicable;
  - A selection of the main works and/or articles published by all the experts involved, in relation to the relevant subjects specified in this tender.

- Specific information concerning the proposed methodology for delivering the tasks listed in part 2 of this call.

ii)   Financial proposal

The prices of the financial proposal must be quoted in euros, including if the subcontractor is based in a country which is not in the euro-area. As far as the tenderers of those countries are concerned, they cannot change the amount of the bid because of the evolution of the exchange rate. The tenderers choose the exchange rate and assume all risks or opportunities relating to the rate fluctuation.

Prices must be fixed amounts and shall not include travel expenses and daily allowances for the attendance to the in-person Steering Committee meetings and other project events which will be covered by ETUC on the basis of EU rules & thresholds.

The maximum amount available for this contract is EUR 35,000 (VAT and all taxes included).

Prices shall be fixed and not subject to revision during the performance of the contract.

8. Award Criteria

The contract will be awarded to the tender offering the best value for money, taking into account the specific objectives, requirements and selection criteria of the tender. The principles of transparency and equal treatment will be respected with a view to avoiding any conflicts of interest.

9. Content and selection of the bids

This call for tenders will be published on the ETUC website on Monday 26 January 2026 and will be kept online for 20 calendar days. Offers must be sent at the latest on Sunday 15 February 2026 to ETUC, in electronic format (by e-mail to sbentahar@etuc.org & amartin@etuc.org), and refer to our *"Call for Tenders – ShapeTech"*.

The ETUC will confirm the date and time of receipt of each bid. The ETUC will sign the report on the bids received, which will list the admissible bids and provide reasons for rejecting bids owing to their failure to comply with the stipulations of the tendering process.

The ETUC will also evaluate the tenders that have been deemed admissible. An evaluation report and classification of participation requests will be drawn up, dated and signed by the ETUC and kept for future reference.

This report will include:

1. The name and address of the contracting authority, the purpose and value of the contract;
2. The names of any excluded candidates and the reasons for their rejection;
3. The names of candidates selected for consideration and the justification for their selection;
4. The names of candidates put forward and justification of their choice in terms of the selection or award criteria.