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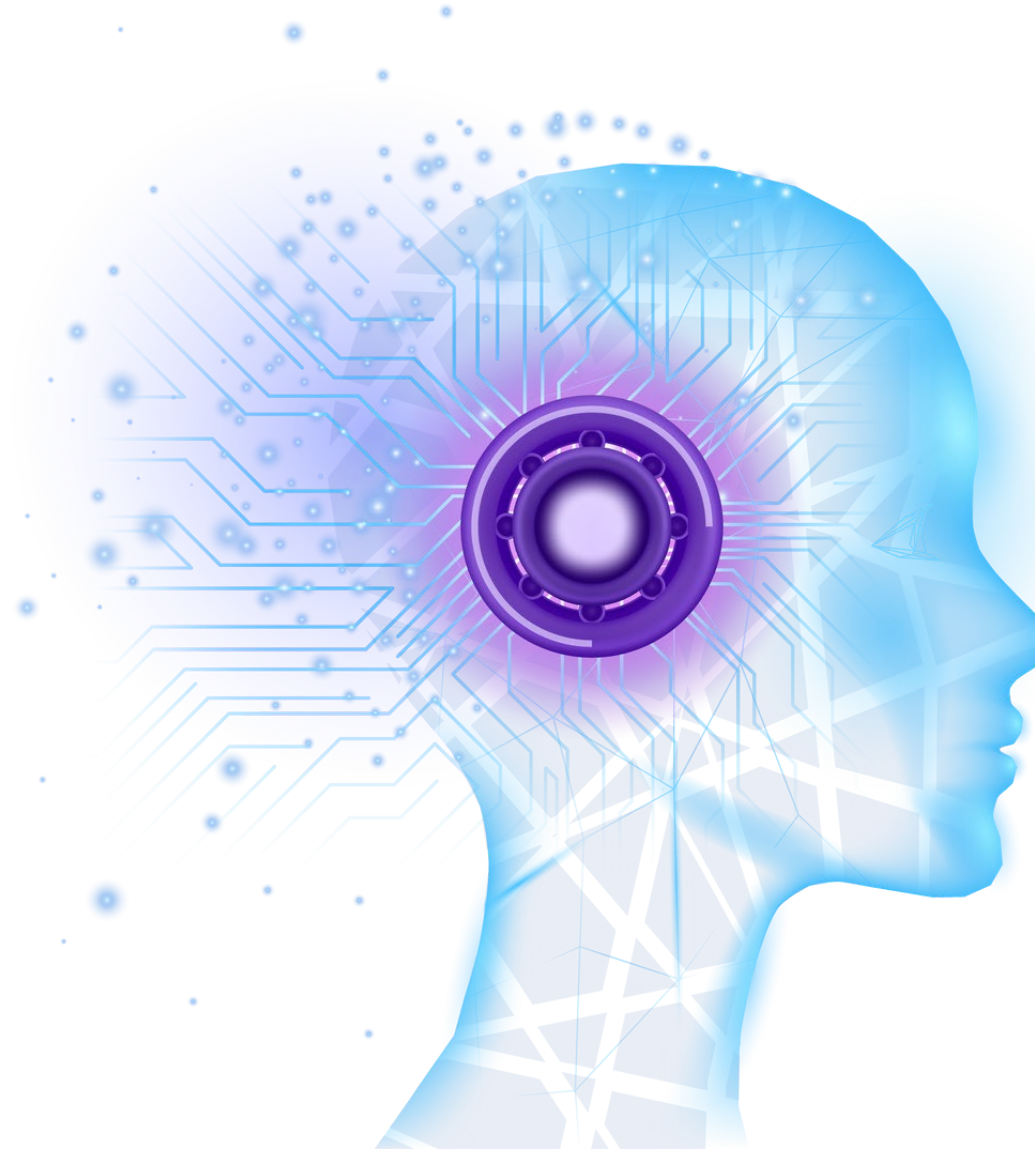
How new policy issues create opportunities for social partner participation

A comparative study of artificial intelligence and algorithmic management in Slovakia and Italy

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Central European Labour Studies Institute (CELSI)

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Why AI and algorithmic management at work matter

79%

of European mid-level managers report using AM tools

Milanez et al. (2025), OECD



Benefits

- Higher productivity: automated routine tasks, faster workflows
- 60% of mid-level managers report better decision-making, through more information and faster processes

Kassa & Worku (2025); Milanez et al. (2025)

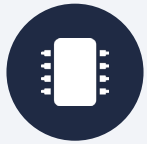


Risks

- Work intensification and loss of autonomy
- Privacy and data concerns
- Job insecurity, deskilling, discrimination
- Weaker social work environment

Cox & Oosterwijk (2024); De Stefano & Taes (2023); European Commission (2025a); Jensen et al. (2024)

Understanding AI and algorithmic management



Artificial intelligence

A machine-based system that, with some autonomy, infers from its inputs how to generate outputs (predictions, content, recommendations or decisions)

European Commission (2025b)



Algorithmic management

Algorithmic systems that use tracked data and other information to organise, assign, monitor, supervise and evaluate work

ILO (2024)



Two types of AM

Basic AM

Predefined algorithms and rules

Modern AM

Uses AI that can adapt the algorithms

Examples



Basic AM

Rule-based: “if A, then B”

- Swipe card at entrance → door opens → entry time recorded
- The employer knows when you arrived

Modern AM (hereinafter AI/AM)

Data-driven and adaptive



- Ride-hailing platforms set prices in real time
- The system decides how much you earn, without a human manager

Baiocco & Fernández-Macías (2022)

Regulation of AI/AM systems

Regulatory context

Domínguez de Olazábal (2025); ETUC (2025); Minotakis (2025); Yusifli (2025)

01

- GDPR provides basic safeguards, but not AI/AM specific
- AI Act: obligations for high-risk AI, but limited worker contestation rights and potential loopholes
- Platform Work Directive: better protection for workers, but sector-specific

A floor, not a ceiling (AI Act, Art. 2(11))

Regulation (EU) 2024/1689

02

- Member States may adopt rules that protect workers better
- Social partners may agree more favourable terms in collective agreements

03

Role of social partners

How will social partners use this opportunity in Slovakia and Italy?

Same EU rules, different industrial relations regimes

Research question: *How do social partners utilise AI/AM systems as a new policy issue to increase their participation in policymaking within different industrial relations systems?*

● Slovakia

*State-centred with liberal, market-oriented features
("embedded neoliberalism")*

~26%

collective bargaining
coverage

Union density: ~11.8%
Employer org. density: ~62.6%
Bargaining level: **Company /
sectoral**
Coordination: **Low**

Weak, fragmented social partners; often favours employer
interests

● Italy

*Statist system with corporatist elements (Southern
European model)*

~100%

collective bargaining
coverage

Union density: ~30.2%
Employer org. density: ~77%
Bargaining level: **Sectoral**
Coordination: **Moderate**

Unions retain mobilisation capacity; participation depends
on political context

Sources: Visser (2009); Bohle & Greskovits (2012); OECD (2025), ICTWSS; Eurofound (2024a, 2024b); Kahancová & Uhlerová (2023)

Industrial relations regimes in Europe

	North	Centre-west	South	West	Centre-east
Production regime	Coordinated market economy		Statist market economy	Liberal market economy	Statist or liberal?
Welfare regime	Universalistic	Segmented (status-oriented, corporatist)		Residual	Segmented or residual?
Employment regime	Inclusive	Dualistic		Liberal	
Industrial relations regime	Organised corporatism	Social partnership	Polarised/state-centred	Liberal pluralism	Fragmented/state-centred
Power balance	Labour-oriented	Balanced	Alternating	Employer-oriented	
Principal level of bargaining	Sector		Variable/unstable	Company	
Bargaining style	Integrating		Conflict oriented		Acquiescent
Role of SP in public policy	Institutionalised		Irregular/politicised	Rare/event-driven	Irregular/politicised
Role of the state in IR	Limited (mediator)	'Shadow of hierarchy'	Frequent intervention	Non-intervention	Organiser of transition
Employee representation	Union based/high coverage	dual system/high coverage	Variable (*)	Union based/small coverage	Union based/small coverage
Countries	Denmark Finland Norway Sweden	Belgium Germany (Ireland) Luxembourg Netherlands Austria Slovenia (Finland)	Greece Spain France Italy (Hungary) Portugal	Ireland Malta Cyprus UK	Bulgaria Czech Republic Estonia Latvia Lithuania Hungary Poland Romania Slovakia

Source: J. Visser, extended on the basis of Ebbinghaus and Visser (1997); Crouch 1993; 1996; Esping-Andersen (1990); Schmidt (2002; 2006); and Platzner and Kohl (2007).

(*) In France employee representation in firms incorporates both principles, in Spain and Portugal it is dualist, in Italy and Greece it is merged with the unions but based on statutory rights.

Source: Visser (2009)

Study design



Design

Comparative qualitative case study: Slovakia and Italy



Data

8 semi-structured interviews (4 SK, 4 IT) with trade unions and employer organisations at national and sectoral levels (regional).



Analysis

Thematic coding in Dedoose, combining deductive and inductive codes

Measuring participation in policymaking

3

Decision-making authority

Tripartite agreement; autonomous (bipartite) collective agreements

2

Involvement in implementation

Bipartite agreements (dependent or sponsored); joint guidelines; implementation committees; labour market boards.

1

Consultation

Social dialogue and public consultations

0

No participation

Unilateral action by state or employers

Based on Visser (2009)

Participation channels and social partners

	Slovakia	Italy
Participation channels	Economic and Social Council (consultative role); bipartite and tripartite bodies across levels	CNEL with broader advisory competences (propose draft legislation); multiple bipartite and tripartite bodies across levels
Main trade union confederations and federations	KOZ SR, SOS, NKOS	CGIL, CISL, UIL, SPI-CGIL, Filcams-CGIL, FP-CGIL, ST-CISL, FNP-CISL, Fisascat-CISL, UILA, UIL Pensionati, UILFPL
Main employer organisations and confederations	AZZZ SR, RUZ, ZMOS, APZD	Confartigianato Imprese, Confcommercio, CNA, Confesercenti, Casartigiani, Confindustria, ABL, Confapi, Confcooperative, Legacoop, AGCI

Source: Author's compilation based on Eurofound (2024a, 2024b)

Strategies: a broader repertoire in Italy

● Slovakia

Awareness-raising Workshops Lobbying
Comments on legislation

Who uses them

Trade unions: main actors using these strategies

Employer organisations: mostly training on how to work with these systems, lobbying and comments on legislation

● Italy

Awareness-raising Publications Training
Bargaining strategies Working groups Research
Lobbying Institutional participation Strikes

Who uses them

Trade unions: awareness-raising, publications, training, bargaining strategies, mobilisation, working groups

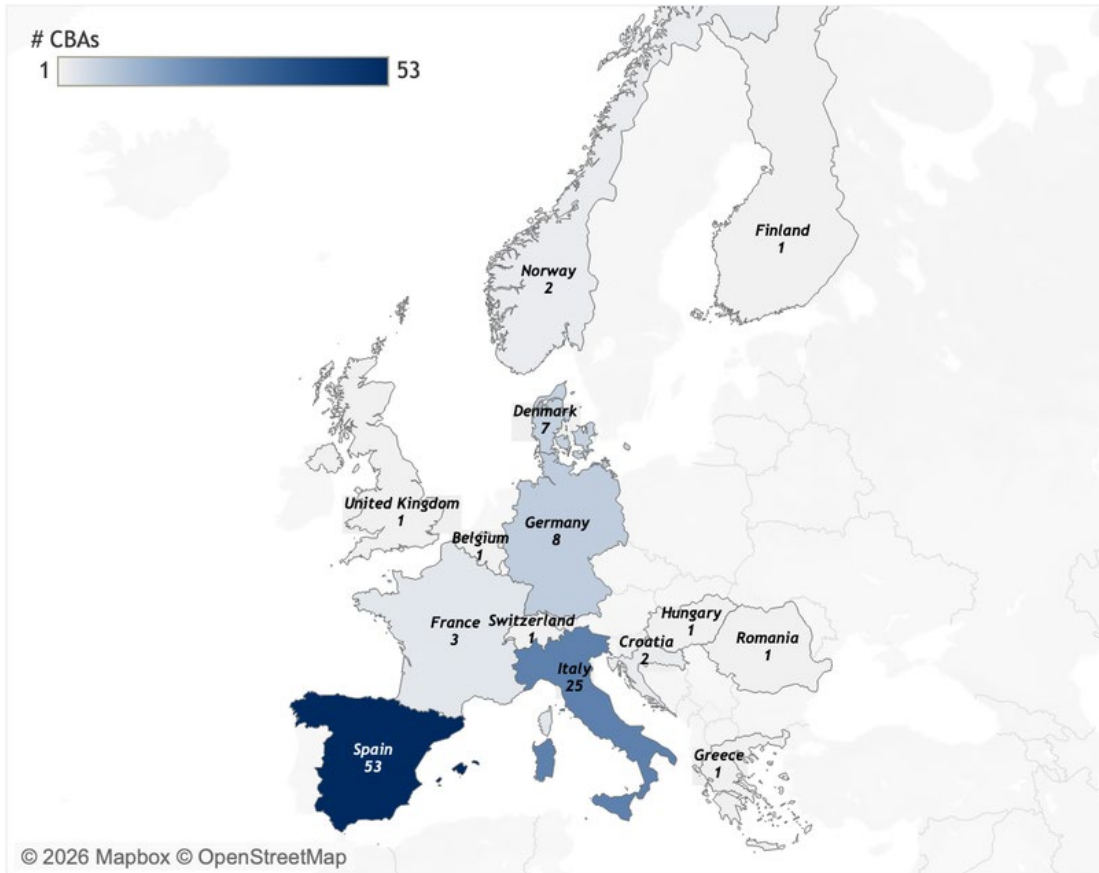
Employer organisations: research, institutional participation, working groups

How far does participation go?

	Slovakia Mostly 0–1, emerging 2	Italy Values 0–3
3 Decision-making	<i>Not identified</i>	Collective agreements at national-sectoral and company levels
2 Implementation	Government Council for Digital Transformation and AI (new, April 2026)	CNEL: can propose draft legislation and assess EU law
1 Consultation	Comments on legislation (Slov-lex); Economic and Social Council; Digital Coalition	Parliamentary hearings; consultations; CNEL (OPERA); Social Partners' Consultative Body (Observatory on the Adoption of AI Systems...)
0 None	Employers often implement AI/AM without consulting unions	Unilateral implementation in some cases

Sources: interviews; CNEL (2026); MIRRI (2026); Ministry of Labour and Social Policies (2026)

AI/AM is entering collective agreements



Source: WageIndicator Collective Agreements Database, accessed in January 2026. N=108.

108

collective agreements on AI/AM
in the WageIndicator database
(January 2026)

25

in Italy: the second highest
number after Spain (53)

0

recorded for Slovakia

Kahancová et al. (2026), based on the WageIndicator Collective Agreements Database

Recommendations



Guide

State · SK and IT

Clear guidance on applying the AI Act, plus support for human-centred adoption in companies, especially where companies are in the testing phase or lack knowledge and organizational skills



Train

Social partners · especially SK

Training and workshops for workers, employers and union members, to bring AI/AM into social dialogue



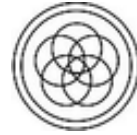
Enforce

State · mainly IT (potentially SK)

Transparency rules exist, but not enforced effectively



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What about your country, your organisation?

Thank you

Daryn Zholdasbay · Central European Labour Studies Institute (CELSI)

Read the full study

Zholdasbay, D. (2026). How new policy issues create opportunities for social partner participation: A comparative study of artificial intelligence and algorithmic management in Slovakia and Italy (CELSI Research Report No. 72). Central European Labour Studies Institute.



Scan for the report

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Same opportunity, different outcomes

Italy

0–3 participation

- More diverse and advanced strategies
- AI/AM used to create and expand participation channels (CNEL, OPERA)
- AI/AM entered collective bargaining; agreements at national-sectoral and company levels

Slovakia

0–1 participation

- AI/AM is still an emerging topic
- Mainly advisory and consultative channels, plus a newly established council
- No collective agreements or structured social dialogue on AI/AM identified