
Generative Artificial Intelligence in the publishing and information sector in Italy: present and future challenges for trade unions and workers' right

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Abstract

The development of generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) can have a huge impact on the publishing and information sector, with effects on the work organization, quality of work, labour market, workers' rights and participation.

This paper analyse the impacts of AI in the large Italian publishing companies. In particular, the analysis focused the introduction of AI in the working processes; its impacts on employment and unemployment; the effects on work organisation; the ethical challenges for the protection of the quality of information and copyright; the challenges for the trade unions, especially in terms of bargaining, workers' rights, and training courses. Research methodology is based on the analysis of literature, company's agreements and in-depth interviews with trade unions delegates and workers in the publishing and information sector.

The analysis show that, in the recent decades, the publishing and information sector in Italy has undergone an intense phase of digitalization but, in the current phase, the experimentation of AI is still quite embryonic. However, there are many risks for the quality of work, because the processes are elusive and rapid and may lead, even in the short term, to large waves of staff reductions and great changes in the working activities. In the last decades, technology has taken the place of the most repetitive and standardized manual work, but today AI opens new scenarios, with the risk of replacing skills related to the actual content creation. Possible effects on some activities are the work intensification, the devaluation of some high-skilled professions, the loss of rights, starting from the recognition of copyright law.

Actually, workers' conflicts and mobilizations do not focus on the specific issue of AI, but on more general issues related to broader processes of digitalization and restructuring (such as precarious work and work organization), also because it is difficult to see the concrete application of AI in the working processes.

This study is part of a European project on the impact of generative AI on the labour market (Transformwork 2), in various sectors. In particular, the focus of this report is publishing and information sector in Italy.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, Trade Unions, Publishing and Information Sector, Work organization

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