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Algorithmic management: Workers challenge the European Commission

On 4 November, Leïla Chaibi, Member of the European Parliament for La France insoumise and Coordinator of the Employment and Social Affairs Committee for The Left Group, organised a meeting bringing together workers, trade union representatives from several European countries and European Commission officials.



Amazon, Microsoft, Ubisoft, call centres... Their testimonies all point to the same trend: **algorithms are becoming increasingly embedded in the day-to-day organisation of work**. They assign tasks, measure performance, monitor employees, assess their behaviour and can contribute to disciplinary decisions.

Today, workers are too often presented with a fait accompli. These tools are introduced without proper information or consultation with employee representatives. Workers are unaware of the criteria used by algorithms or the data on which their assessments are based.

The European legal framework remains inadequate. The AI Act alone does not provide the safeguards needed in employment relationships. The Platform Work Directive, which introduced protections against algorithmic management, remains limited to platform workers. This was the purpose of the meeting: to make the reality of working life heard by those preparing the next piece of European legislation.

On 3 December, the European Commission is due to present its proposal on quality jobs (Quality Jobs Act). For Leïla Chaibi, this legislation must be an opportunity to extend to all workers the rights already secured for platform workers:

"When a machine dictates work pace, monitors breaks and evaluates work, rules are essential. We secured rights for platform workers. Now we must extend them to all workers across Europe. The Commission holds the pen: we expect it to deliver genuine legislation guaranteeing transparency, human oversight and rights for workers and their representatives."

From Amazon warehouses to call centres:
Algorithms have already taken hold in the workplace.

The testimonies gathered on 4 November show how algorithmic management is transforming a wide range of professions:

AMAZON | Timed down to the very second
Rami Lamouchi, Amazon warehouse worker and CGT union representative, and Guillaume Robin, Regional Manager and UGICT union representative:
Scanners that time every movement, breaks flagged as unproductive time, dashboards tracking individual performance: at Amazon, every deviation is measured and can lead to a meeting with a manager. Trade unions denounce the lack of transparency and consultation surrounding these tools, as well as their impact on workers' health.

CALL CENTRES | AI scores employees, even analysing their conversations
Calls are transcribed, spoken words analysed and performance assessed by software. A call centre worker can be penalised for failing to follow a sales script to the letter. AI can even decide to send them for training.
“I no longer feel like a manager. I'm just feeding the AI,” says Charlène Gourdin (Concentrix).

NALLO | Even messages of condolence are assessed by AI
Nacera Meliani and Nabil Belkadi, CNE union representatives and employees at Nallo, a Belgian company specialising in customer relations.
At their contact centre, AI is already involved in call distribution and performance monitoring.
Nacera recounted a particularly revealing case: an employee calls a customer who has just lost her mother. She offers her condolences at the beginning of the call. The AI gives her a poor score because the script required her to do so at the end. Breaks are also monitored and can lead to an acceleration of work pace when employees return.

MICROSOFT | Work dictated by algorithms
A European technical support engineer, whose identity is being protected.
Software automatically distributes requests among engineers, without adequately taking into account their actual workload or the complexity of each case. The result: work intensification, loss of autonomy and deteriorating relationships between colleagues.

UBISOFT | AI undermines workers' skills
Chakib Mataoui, programmer at Ubisoft Paris studio and Solidaires union representative.
Teams are being assigned an ever-increasing number of projects on the assumption that AI will save them time. However, a temporary suspension of certain tools revealed how dependent several employees had become on these technologies. Chakib also warns of the loss of skills and the gradual replacement of junior recruits.

Other testimonies presented included Kela (Finland), where an employee was dismissed on the basis of an incorrect algorithmic calculation of his breaks, before a court ruled that his dismissal was unlawful; as well as Danish and European trade union representatives, who warned about the lack of worker consultation when AI is introduced in the workplace.

Algorithmic management must be regulated by European legislation

For Leïla Chaibi and The Left Group in the European Parliament, the protections secured through the Platform Work Directive must become a common baseline for all workers. The upcoming European legislation on quality jobs must establish concrete rights:

1. TRANSPARENCY

- Inform workers about the tools being used, how they work and what data they collect.
- Give workers access to the criteria used to assess their performance and allocate their work.

2. HUMAN OVERSIGHT

- Guarantee human review of algorithmic decisions.
- Enable every worker to challenge decisions affecting them.
- Ban the monitoring of emotions, psychological states and private conversations.

3. WORKERS' POWER

- Make it mandatory to inform and consult trade unions before introducing these tools.
- Give them the right to veto their implementation.
- Involve employee representatives in the selection and monitoring of these systems.

4. REMPLOYERS' RESPONSIBILITY

- Protect all workers, including self-employed workers and subcontracted employees.
- Train managers and developers on fundamental rights.
- Introduce deterrent penalties for companies that fail to comply with these rules

The Commission must deliver on 3 December

The European Commission is preparing its proposed legislation on quality jobs. It now has workers' testimonies, trade union warnings and concrete examples from the workplace.

Leïla Chaibi is calling for the legislation to include a comprehensive framework regulating algorithmic management and to extend to all workers the protections already granted to platform workers.

Technological innovation cannot be used as an excuse to undermine working conditions. Algorithms must serve workers, not the other way around.

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