

TUC: UK is “losing race against time” to regulate AI in the workplace

- ❑. **AI Employment Bill “urgently” needed to keep pace with rapid technological change and to protect workers, say unions, legal and tech experts**
- ❑. **Union body publishes “ready-to-go” legal blueprint for regulating AI at work**
- ❑. **NEW POLL reveals that huge majority of working adults oppose AI being used to performance manage and fire staff**
- ❑. **UK at risk of becoming an “international outlier” on AI in the workplace, says TUC**

The TUC has today (Thursday) warned that the UK is “losing the race against time” to regulate AI in the workplace.

The union body says employment law is failing to keep pace with the rapid speed of technological change – leaving many workers vulnerable to exploitation and discrimination.

The warning comes as OpenAI and Meta say they are on the brink of releasing new artificial intelligence models that will be capable of reasoning and planning.

New legal blueprint

The TUC will today publish a “ready-to-go” legal blueprint for regulating AI in the workplace.

The AI (Regulation and Employment Rights) Bill has been developed in partnership with the Minderoo Centre for Technology and Democracy at the University of Cambridge and the AI Law Consultancy at Cloisters Barristers’ Chambers.

The Bill sets out new legal rights and protections including:

- ❑. A legal duty on employers to consult trade unions on the use of “high risk” and intrusive forms of AI in the workplace.
- ❑. A legal duty of transparency, observability and explainability when employers use AI.
- ❑. A legal right for all job seekers and workers to have a human review of decisions made by AI systems so they can challenge decisions that are unfair and discriminatory.
- ❑. Protections against unfair dismissal by AI.
- ❑. Prohibition on emotion recognition technology.

The Bill follows months of work by the TUC’s [AI taskforce](#) which was advised by a committee of stakeholders - including [Tech UK](#), [the Alan Turing Institute](#), the [BCS](#), [The Chartered Institute for IT](#), [the Institute for The Future of Work](#), trade unions, and a cross-party group of MPs.

The TUC is calling on all political parties to support AI regulation in the workplace – which it describes as an “urgent national priority”.

Greater protection at work

The need for AI workplace protections is overwhelmingly backed by British workers.

New polling – carried out for the TUC by YouGov – shows that:

- ❑. 69% of working adults in the UK think employers should have to consult their staff first before introducing new technologies such as AI in the workplace.
- ❑. 71% of working adults in the UK oppose AI being used in performance management and bonus decisions.

- . 77% of working adults in the UK oppose AI being used to make hiring decisions.
- . 86% of working adults in the UK oppose AI being used to make firing decisions.

The TUC says AI is already making “high-risk, life changing” decisions about workers’ lives – such as line-managing, hiring and firing staff.

And AI is being used to analyse facial expressions, tone of voice and accents to assess candidates’ suitability for roles.

Left unchecked, this could lead to greater discrimination, unfairness and exploitation at work across the economy, the union body warns.

Meanwhile employers are purchasing and using systems without knowing fully the implications, such as whether they create discrimination and unfairness.

International outlier

The TUC believes the UK is at risk of becoming an ‘international outlier’ on AI regulation.

While the US, EU, China and Canada are all implementing new laws for how AI should be used, politicians here have yet to take any legislative action.

The TUC highlighted a growing consensus amongst international bodies like the [OECD](#) that there is urgent need for policy action on AI and employment and that unions have a key role to play.

TUC Assistant General Secretary **Kate Bell** said:

“UK employment law is simply failing to keep pace with the rapid speed of technological change. We are losing the race to regulate AI in the workplace.

“AI is already making life-changing calls in the workplace – including how people are hired, performance managed and fired.

“We urgently need to put new guardrails in place to protect workers from exploitation and discrimination. This should be a national priority.

“Other countries are regulating workplace AI – so that staff and employers know where they stand. The UK can’t afford to drag its feet and become an international outlier.”

Professor **Gina Neff**, Executive Director of the Minderoo Centre for Technology and Democracy at the University of Cambridge, said:

“This Bill would provide robust protections for employees and bring UK employment law into the AI era. It would prevent employers from making bad decisions with bad AI.

“Workers already face the effects of AI systems through increased surveillance, biased hiring systems and shoddy management algorithms. And this Bill would prevent pseudo-science emotion recognition systems from being used in workplaces.

“Sadly, as we have seen in the UK, bad tech ruins lives. Workers deserve means to recourse and redress when computer systems fail. This Bill would ensure employees have a right to a human review when high risk decisions are made by AI about their employment.

“I welcome that this Bill sets out employers’ duties to say what AI tools they are using and how they are using them, their obligations to make sure those AI systems work, and their requirements to share data so that employees and their unions can share in the benefits as well.”

The AI Law Consultancy's **Robin Allen KC** and **Dee Masters** said:

"Legal rules and strong regulation are urgently necessary to ensure the benefits of AI are fairly-shared and its harms avoided.

"Innumerable commentators have argued for the need to control AI at work, but before today *none* had previously done the heavy-lifting necessary to draft the legislation.

"So we are immensely proud to produce this detailed Bill with colleagues."

Adam Leon Smith, a Fellow of BCS, The Chartered Institute for IT said:

"As technology professionals, we recognise the transformative potential of AI, but also the significant risks it poses when not properly managed.

"This draft legislation provides a balanced framework that would not only protect workers from unfair and discriminatory practices but also guide employers on the transparent and responsible use of AI systems. That level of accountability is essential to maintaining public trust in technology and fostering a fair digital economy."

Anna Thomas, Founding Director and Co-Director, Institute for Future of Work said:

"As we see AI systems being bestowed with more wide-reaching applications and functionalities, consensus is clear that regulation is urgently needed to protect workers and sustain access to good quality jobs.

"This Bill reflects this urgency, and – vitally - connects well with regulatory moves internationally so will keep the UK in alignment with others.

"We strongly believe that this Bill delivering collective access to data and a duty to conduct ongoing impact assessment of systems through the whole technology lifecycle will help innovation and social good advance together."

Adam Cantwell Corn, Head of Campaigns and Policy at Connected by Data, said:

"In the debate on how to make AI safer, we need to get beyond woolly ideas and turn values and principles into actionable rights and responsibilities.

"The Bill does exactly this and lays down a key marker for what comes next."