

## Computers create a need for workplace innovation!

Anticipating this year's Summer School at San Sebastian

Steven Dhondt, TNO

The H2020 [Beyond 4.0](#) project cooperates with EUWIN, aiming to change the European debate on technology and work. If you look closely at where the discussion on technology and work has been going, it does not suggest a promising future for workers.

Frey & Osborne wrote an [article](#) at Oxford University in 2013, meant as a first step to understanding what may happen in the future of work. In fact, you can see the publication as an attempt to correct an earlier article by David Autor (and colleagues) in 2003 on technology and its consequences for work. Autor et al acknowledged that computers had taken over from traditional job-replacing machines. In fact, they saw computers as complementing workers and enabling the creation of more jobs than we had ever thought possible.

Frey & Osborne organised discussions with Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning specialists to understand what may happen with future jobs. The new thesis was that computers would no longer complement workers but automate the cognitive skills that workers added to the production process. With their expectation that 47% of professions would be automated, the future of work would look very bleak indeed.

The strange thing is how time works. In 2013, the same time that Frey & Osborne delivered their Oxford paper, EUWIN was launched by the European Commission to support change in European workplaces. Such change was needed in the context of upskilling and the growing need for empowered and motivated employees. EUWIN continues its work even though EU funding has finished, while the European Commission continued to promote workplace innovation through the [INNOSUP call](#). Even in the European Pillar of Social Rights, launched by the European Commission to safeguard the European worker, workplace innovation is still advocated as an important goal for European workplaces ([see article the May 2021 EUWIN Bulletin](#)).

The *Beyond 4.0* project proposal was written by many supporters of EUWIN. Our *Beyond 4.0* team believed that the basic premises of the Frey & Osborne study were incorrect. Many reviews have pointed to weaknesses in the study. However, we believe that the critique is still not complete. We will publish more on this subject in the coming year.

We need to understand that the future will still need the input of the employed class. There is a need for engaged workers; for inspired leadership in companies and organisations; there is a need to understand why and how workplace innovation-driven policies are necessary. There is a need for EUWIN.

The [Beyond 4.0 Summer School](#) is planned for the first week of June in San Sebastian, Spain. At the writing of this editorial, it is still unclear if the Summer School can be a live event. If so, this would probably be the first live event in these pandemic times. If not, our Spanish partners from San Sebastian have designed the programme to allow a hybrid event. We will be sad if we need to talk to everyone through our computer screen, but we will be able to carry on with our message about what kind of work is possible in the future. Up to 25 PhD students will bring their work together and share ideas about a work-filled future. We will be happy to support them.

### European Workplace Innovation Network (EUWIN)

EUWIN was established by the European Commission in 2013 and is now entirely supported by contributions from an international network of partners co-ordinated by HIVA (University of Leuven). EUWIN also functions as a network partner for the H2020 *Beyond4.0* project.

[www.euwin.net](http://www.euwin.net) | [contact@workplaceinnovation.eu](mailto:contact@workplaceinnovation.eu)

The cooperation between EUWIN and Beyond 4.0 is an important cornerstone of changing European workplaces. We need to be confident in the capabilities of the European worker. In these times of technology, Brexit, division, pandemic, we need to help restore trust in what employees can do.

Hope to see you in Spain. Or on screen!

Details and registration for the Summer School can be found [here](#).

### European Workplace Innovation Network (EUWIN)

EUWIN was established by the European Commission in 2013 and is now entirely supported by contributions from an international network of partners co-ordinated by HIVA (University of Leuven). EUWIN also functions as a network partner for the H2020 *Beyond4.0* project.

[www.euwin.net](http://www.euwin.net) | [contact@workplaceinnovation.eu](mailto:contact@workplaceinnovation.eu)