



# Creativity or submission? Young Europeans face generative artificial intelligence in a hyper-regulated market

European View  
1–6© The Author(s) 2025  
DOI: 10.1177/17816858251380924  
[journals.sagepub.com/home/euv](https://journals.sagepub.com/home/euv)**Maurizio Sacconi**

Istituto Bruno Leoni, Italy

## Abstract

Young Europeans are already immersed in a new world where generative technologies are developing in unpredictable ways. The article aims to assess the growing risks and opportunities of work and to identify ways to be creative leaders in the new productive processes. The risk of submission to algorithms might depend on the hyper-regulatory framework and the consequent worry of civil or criminal liability. Simple, clear and soft rules, holistic education, full involvement in firms' strategies, objective-focused working, profit sharing and appropriate remuneration should promote young workers' sense of responsibility and critical thinking. Only a business-friendly environment will stimulate a creative approach to generative artificial intelligence. In this context, young people in Europe might promote a new season of entrepreneurship and self-employment.

## Keywords

Generative AI, Soft regulation, Business-friendly environment, Creativity, Submission, Holistic education, Workers' involvement, Appropriate remuneration

## Introduction

Young Europeans are facing significant challenges in the new productive and working world. The second industrial revolution is now definitively over. But, paradoxically, the organisational models typical of mass production are still used in services and even in education. Technology is changing very quickly and in unpredictable ways. This is the result of human intelligence, even if technology seems to be developing a growing

## Corresponding author:

Maurizio Sacconi, Istituto Bruno Leoni, piazza Castello 23, Milan, 20121, Italy.

Email: [mauriziosacconi1@gmail.com](mailto:mauriziosacconi1@gmail.com)



Creative Commons CC BY: This article is distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 License (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>) which permits any use, reproduction and distribution of the work without further permission provided the original work is attributed as specified on the SAGE and Open Access pages (<https://us.sagepub.com/en-us/nam/open-access-at-sage>).

ability to generate itself. In some situations, this could lead to people being controlled and led by machines. However, as Pope Leo XIV recently stated, ‘the person is not a system of algorithms: he or she is a creature, relationship, mystery’ (Leo XIV 2025). The present article aims to assess the risks and opportunities for young people at work and to identify the ways for them to become creative players in the new productive processes.

## The European regulatory framework in the time of artificial intelligence

Consistent with its traditional vocation, with the arrival of AI the EU has immediately introduced new rules (Artificial Intelligence (AI) Act, European Parliament and Council 2024). This heavy-handed regulation introduces prohibitions even before the phenomenon has been fully understood, based on the incorrect belief that it can be restrained. More broadly, European institutions should now reconsider the entire regulatory framework that has been developed over a long period of stability and predictability. In this new context, it is precisely the excess of rigid, sanctioning rules that could cause European citizens to adopt the wrong attitude towards intelligent machines. Strong deregulation could increase people’s capabilities while, *sic stantibus rebus*, new machines could be largely used as a shield to protect individuals from possible civil or criminal liability. The former would raise the level of human creativity, while the latter would result in a dangerous decline due to the persistent delegation of decisions to algorithms, as recent research, albeit limited to routine tasks, has shown.

The study, produced by researchers at Microsoft and Carnegie Mellon University, entitled ‘The Impact of Generative AI on Critical Thinking: Self-Reported Reductions in Cognitive Effort and Confidence Effects From a Survey of Knowledge Workers’ (Lee et al. 2025), provides significant findings. The report is based on a survey of 319 individuals, who provided 936 examples of how they use generative AI in their work. Notably, the report reveals that excessive reliance on these tools can impair critical-thinking abilities and result in a ‘deterioration of cognitive faculties that ought to be preserved’ (Lee et al. 2025, 1). According to researchers, ‘a key irony of automation is that by mechanising routine tasks and leaving exception handling to human users, you deprive them of opportunities to exercise their judgement and strengthen their cognitive abilities’ (Lee et al. 2025, 1). This results in their cognitive abilities becoming atrophied, leaving them unprepared when exceptions do arise.

In Europe, we should also consider the less-regulated frameworks of our main competitors. One of the new US president’s first executive orders was to revoke Biden’s act on AI (The White House 2023). That legislation required AI developers to carry out safety tests to ensure the AI met certain standards before releasing their products to the public and sharing the results with the government. However, the paradox here is that Europe considered President Biden’s action to be late and weak. This greater freedom in the US has immediately attracted significant investments aimed at competing with

China, which is no longer content to simply copy others' ideas. Thanks to its entrepreneurial state and lack of constraints protecting users and workers, China is now producing powerful innovations. In this context, Europe's inclination to hyper-regulate will only serve to sideline the continent in terms of technological evolution, causing the entire EU economy to lose competitiveness. Therefore, it is clear that Europe will also have to adapt to a global framework characterised by few rules. In its own way.

This technological leap forward requires a new approach that aligns with its dynamism and the legitimate goal of orienting it towards the common good. In the initial phase, at least, careful and continuous monitoring, alongside the production of simple, adaptable documents, such as guidelines, technical standards, best practices, codes of conduct and collective bargaining regulations, could be more effective. Soft laws or certified self-regulation by economic and social actors would encourage competitive innovation and promote transparency, thereby enabling institutional control.

## Holistic education

The above perspective highlights the importance of equipping young Europeans with the skills needed to use technologies creatively and engage with generative AI with critical thinking. This involves providing them with the ability to discern information, think divergently, make autonomous and responsible decisions, take calculated risks and embrace the *schöpferische Zerstörung* (creative destruction) described by Joseph Schumpeter (1942). It also means accepting that failure can be a stepping stone to success.

The talents of every young person can be identified at an early age and matched with the appropriate educational guidance. A wide range of interlinked educational pathways, including dual apprenticeships based on the German model, could provide all young people with access to higher education, regardless of their social background. These pathways could also help to reduce the number of school dropouts. In each pathway, albeit in different ways, it is necessary to review traditional teaching methods and content thoroughly, with the aim of providing individuals with a well-rounded education. In the works of Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi, 'heart, mind and hand' are the three pillars of holistic education. These correspond to moral education, theoretical knowledge and learning based on practical experiences. These three dimensions are clearly interconnected, encouraging dialogue and joint programme planning between educational institutions, families and businesses. Taking such an approach would help schools to overcome corporate and self-referential attitudes, develop transversal capabilities such as interpersonal skills and creative problem-solving, and address the most challenging issue of moral education.

In this regard, the theme of the shared roots of European culture and our anthropological perspective emerges once again. Conversely, the issue of freedom of educational choice among the available options arises. Europe has long been multicultural, but as with any welcoming land, it does not abandon its identity or its principles. Rather, it

affirms them as a prerequisite for tolerant dialogue, though obviously not to the extent of tolerating acts that offend human dignity.

At a time of clear need for radical innovation in education, the EU could initiate a decision-making process to remove the legal status of educational qualifications. Within an essential regulatory framework, this would encourage competition between education providers and ensure that the most effective training environments are recognised by the market, guaranteeing access for all deserving young people.

It is only by fully educating the younger generation that Europe will be able to transform itself into a vast start-up community and spearhead creative initiatives.

## **Workers' involvement and profit sharing**

Young Europeans are joining companies that have adopted new organisational models, moving away from rigid vertical hierarchies and repetitive, segmented tasks. Employees at these companies are expected to work towards objectives and achieve results, enjoying greater flexibility in terms of working hours and locations. However, this does not mean working in isolation. On the contrary, horizontal collaboration and relationships develop within teams assigned to specific projects. Everyone is expected to contribute all their abilities to the company's goals, not just their technical skills. Consequently, the interests of the company and the worker's desire to participate in decision-making processes tend to align.

The experience of EU member states with regard to collective labour relations has been varied. These relations have ranged from regulated forms of co-determination to recurring ideological conflicts within companies throughout the twentieth century. The present moment is optimal for the initiation of a virtuous convergence towards participatory experiences that are consultative, organisational, financial and managerial. In circumstances where companies encounter difficulties in both recruiting and retaining young talents, the provision of involvement opportunities has been demonstrated to engender a sense of belonging to the company among employees more than a rhetorical declaration of corporate identity principles (Waller 2021).

## **Appropriate remuneration of young people**

In a time when employees are requested to dedicate themselves entirely to the objectives of the company, they are entitled to be rewarded on the basis of their own expectations and needs, as well as those of their families. It is evident that younger employees have strong aspirations for rotational programmes of experiences that engender personal fulfilment and enhance their professional competences. Furthermore, they seek remuneration that is perceived as being in fair proportion to their contribution to organisational outcomes. In addition, there has been an expressed desire for social benefits and services that facilitate day-to-day living, bolster purchasing power and foster a sense of identification with the corporate community. This shift signifies a transition in collective labour

relations from the national to the company level. National collective agreements, due to the critical mass they guarantee, should retain the mission of developing sustainable health, social welfare and pension funds that supplement the benefits provided by the state. However, it is only at the local level, through the establishment of collective agreements and personalised contracts, that the periodic recognition of wage increases linked to additional skills and responsibilities, the definition of bonuses connected to results, and the addition of further benefits dedicated to the well-being of workers and their families can be achieved.

The concept of remuneration encompasses both direct and indirect forms, serving not only to address fundamental material needs but also functioning as a gauge of the quality of work performed. Consequently, young people demonstrate an aversion to a system in which wages are determined exclusively through national collective bargaining in a uniform manner, evolving predominantly in accordance with age. The ongoing transformation in the workforce has resulted in a scenario where adequately trained and motivated young individuals can often exhibit significantly higher levels of creativity and productivity in comparison to their older colleagues. In a strong transition, long-standing experience and habits might be a hindrance to the necessary discontinuity.

## Conclusion

The young generations of Europe, both in the present and the immediate future, will encounter remarkable opportunities due to generative AI, provided they receive adequate education and are motivated to assume risks. As has been demonstrated, there are inherent threats; however, these can be mitigated by liberating creativity from the numerous constraints of hyper-regulation, which has been generated on the unrealistic assumption of zero pathology. In particular, Europe will need to encourage self-employment and a fresh start after failures in good faith. It is imperative that fiscal and bureaucratic deregulation is both bold and discontinuous with respect to the previous European legislature. The decarbonisation targets must be reasonable in terms of deadlines and, through technological neutrality, defined in such a way as to drive innovation. The alternatives, between creativity and submission of labour, will be contingent on the quality (and quantity) of rules. Two opposing outcomes are both possible.

## References

- European Parliament and Council. (2024). Regulation (EU) 2024/1689 laying down harmonised rules on artificial intelligence. OJ L (12 July). <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:32024R1689>. Accessed 10 July 2025.
- Lee, H. P., Sarkar, A., Tankelevitch, L., Drosos, I., Rintel, S., Banks, R., & Wilson, N. (2025). The impact of generative AI on critical thinking: Self-reported reductions in cognitive effort and confidence effects from a survey of knowledge workers. In N. Yamashita (ed.), *CHI '25: Proceedings of the 2025 CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems* (pp. 341–67), New York: Association for Computing Machinery. doi:10.1145/3706598.3713778. Accessed 10 July 2025.
- Leo, XIV. (2025). Audience with the bishops of the Italian Episcopal Conference. *Vatican Apostolic Palace*, 17 June 2025. <https://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/en/bollettino/pubblico/2025/06/17/250617a.html>. Accessed 10 July 2025.

- Schumpeter, J. A. (1942). *Capitalism, socialism and democracy*. New York: Harper & Brothers.
- The White House. (2023). President Biden issues executive order on safe, secure, and trustworthy artificial intelligence. Fact sheet, 30 October. <https://bidenwhitehouse.archives.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2023/10/30/fact-sheet-president-biden-issues-executive-order-on-safe-secure-and-trustworthy-artificial-intelligence/>. Accessed 10 July 2025.
- Van Ours, J. C., & Stoeldraijer, L. (2011). Age, wage and productivity in Dutch manufacturing. *De Economist*, 159(2), 113–37. <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10645-011-9159-4>. Accessed 10 July 2025.
- Waller, L. (2021). Fostering a sense of belonging in the workplace: Enhancing well-being and a positive and coherent sense of self. In S. K. Dhiman (ed.), *The Palgrave handbook of workplace well-being* (pp. 341–67). London: Palgrave Macmillan. doi:10.1007/978-3-030-30025-8\_83.

## Author biography



**Maurizio Sacconi** was previously the Italian Minister of Labour, Health and Social Policies; an International Labour Office official; and a Member of the Italian Parliament. He oversees the Reinventing Work group at the Bruno Leoni Institute.