

Management Summary

Background and objective of the study

Artificial intelligence (AI) is increasingly transforming even tasks that were previously considered difficult to automate. Modern AI applications can generate text and program code, extract information, analyze data, and produce proposals for complex tasks. However, what is technically possible is not the only decisive factor; what matters is where AI is actually deployed and used in everyday working life, how employees work with it, and the changes they perceive.

This development is particularly relevant for the ICT sectors. Companies in telecommunications, IT (including Big Tech), contact and call centers, network infrastructure, and air traffic control are developing, integrating, or operating digital technologies and AI applications. At the same time, they are employing AI within their own internal work processes. In doing so, they are helping to shape this transformation while also being directly affected by changes to tasks, workflows, and requirements.

Many activities can be technically supported, accelerated, or partially taken over by AI. However, it does not automatically follow that entire professions or jobs will disappear, as professions consist of a variety of activities. Individual tasks may be supported, accelerated, or partially taken over by AI, while others continue to require human judgment, expertise, or personal interaction. Consequently, the study focuses not primarily on job titles or employment forecasts, but rather on specific activities and experiences in the everyday work environment.

Against this backdrop, the union syndicom commissioned the research and consulting firm Ecoplan to conduct an empirical study on the impact of AI in the ICT sectors from the employees' perspective. The study centers on four key areas:

- the adoption and practical use of AI in everyday working life;
- the perceived changes in activities, time commitment, requirements, and working conditions;
- the importance of specialist knowledge, skills, learning, and professional development;
- the operational framework, support from companies and the role of management and strategic planning.

The study does not aim to predict how many jobs will be created or lost due to AI in the future. Instead, it shows where AI is already part of everyday working life, how employees are experiencing the changes to date, and what areas of tension are emerging. The findings provide an empirically grounded snapshot within an environment that is rapidly evolving both technologically and operationally.

Methodology and validity

For technical classification, academic and practice-oriented publications dated up to July 2026 were evaluated. In addition, Ecoplan conducted seven exploratory technical discussions with people from academia, further education, labor market research and business practice during the same period. Literature and technical discussions served to determine central topic areas, develop the questionnaire and classify the survey results.

The empirical focus was an anonymous, activity-related online survey among employees in ICT companies. This approach takes into account the diversity of work realities in the companies examined. The respondents were able to select activities from their own everyday work. For these activities, it was recorded how frequently AI is used and how the perceived time expenditure and requirements have changed.

The survey was carried out in the spring of 2026 in German, French, Italian and English. 492 people completed the questionnaire. The participants mostly have extensive professional experience and are comparatively highly qualified. The sample particularly includes employees from telecommunications and IT as well as from large companies. As participation was voluntary, certain groups might be more represented than others, such as people with a particular interest in AI or with strong positive or critical experiences. The results should therefore be understood as a snapshot of the employees surveyed and cannot be extrapolated to all employees in the industries examined.

Key findings

The ICT sectors play a dual role in the transformation.

In the ICT sectors examined, AI is used in the respondents' own work and is also being developed, integrated, or operated. These sectors thus contribute to the spread of such applications across other areas of the economy and society, while also being affected themselves by the associated changes in work. The survey reflects both aspects: a large proportion of respondents actively use AI in their own work, while smaller groups are involved in the provision and operation, development and training, or strategic decision-making regarding AI deployment.

AI has become widely integrated into everyday working life of the group studied.

The vast majority of respondents work with AI on a regular basis. In total, 86 percent use AI at least once a week. In addition to deliberate, active use, many respondents report working with applications where AI runs in the background without being directly controlled by them. The survey did not assess whether respondents were aware of all embedded AI functions. Further points of contact arise through the review and quality assurance of results generated wholly or partially using AI.

Supporting applications are particularly common in active use. These include reviewing one's own work, clarifying subject-specific questions, and developing content collaboratively. Employees thus use AI not only to generate finished results but also as an aid to working and thinking. AI is also used to carry out specific tasks - such as rephrasing, summarizing, or translating texts, as well as handling standardized tasks - though this is mentioned less frequently. The automation of entire work processes or the replacement of employees was not covered by this question.

The changes brought about by AI are becoming apparent primarily at the level of individual activities.

AI is most frequently employed for activities related to development, knowledge, text, and data. Its regular use is currently less common in operational, managerial, and infrastructure-related activities. Changes in the time required and the demands involved also vary depending on the specific activity. Thus, while the survey highlights differences and changes at the level of individual activities, it does not allow for conclusions regarding whether entire professions might disappear.

Less time required does not automatically mean the burden is eased.

Across all types of activities, the most common response - though not a majority - is that the time required has remained unchanged (47 percent). Where changes are perceived, respondents report a reduction in time required far more often than an increase. Reduced time requirements are particularly evident in tasks involving knowledge, text, and development.

The picture is different regarding demands. Here, a majority (61 percent) state that demands have remained roughly the same. However, increased demands are perceived more frequently than decreased ones. Thus, a reduction in time required does not automatically mean an activity becomes easier; changes in time requirements and demands do not necessarily move in the same direction.

Regarding everyday working life as a whole, both positive and burdensome effects are evident. 52 percent of respondents state that AI has made them more productive. Around half feel more confident thanks to the technical support provided by AI. At the same time, similarly large groups report handling multiple tasks simultaneously more often. 46 percent perceive a higher work intensity, and 44 percent more frequently feel uncertain about whether their own results - or those generated by AI - contain errors.

Also particularly common is a tendency to think more frequently about one's own professional future; 68 percent state that AI has prompted them to reflect on this more often. It is impossible to determine from this whether the underlying driver is primarily concern, interest, the perception of new opportunities, or a general need for orientation. Viewed overall, therefore, positive and burdensome effects coexist. However, the available analysis makes it impossible to determine whether the same individuals experience both simultaneously or how the perceived effects relate to specific working conditions.

Expertise, the ability to make sound judgments, and the capacity to learn remain central.

When it comes to working with AI, respondents consider both application-oriented and safety- and quality-related knowledge to be important. Key aspects include data protection and the secure use of AI - such as determining which data may be entered into AI systems - as well as the ability to clearly formulate tasks and a fundamental understanding of how AI works. Handling data and ensuring data quality, along with verifying and contextually evaluating results, are also considered important.

At the same time, respondents see analytical and critical thinking, a willingness to learn, and the ability to adapt to new technologies as becoming increasingly significant. Open-ended responses also highlight the importance of verifying AI outputs, evaluating sources, and identifying erroneous or fabricated statements. Subject-matter expertise remains essential for contextualizing results, identifying errors and risks, and effectively integrating AI into professional and operational workflows.

Regarding professional profiles, there is no clear trend pointing exclusively toward either broadening skill sets or specialization. Forty-three percent of respondents state that they require both a broader understanding of various tasks and contexts and continued in-depth subject-matter expertise. However, 37 percent do not yet perceive a clear shift in their own professional profiles.

Today, competence development takes place primarily during everyday working life.

AI-related knowledge is primarily acquired informally and in close proximity to actual work tasks. Eighty-seven percent of respondents gain knowledge and skills in using AI by experimenting while on the job. Exchanging ideas with colleagues and pursuing self-selected learning opportunities are also common practices. Company-provided materials, internal training sessions, and external professional development courses complement these learning paths but reach smaller groups.

At the same time, many respondents would like their companies to offer additional learning opportunities. Frequently cited examples include practical workshops and courses, time set aside during working hours for self-study and experimenting with AI tools, and concrete tasks that allow new working methods to be tested in practice.

A distinction must be made here regarding targeted preparation for new or evolving professional roles linked to AI. Interest in such roles is more widespread than the actual preparation through professional development undertaken so far. Some respondents are already pursuing targeted training or planning to do so. A larger group is interested in this type of career development in principle but has not yet taken concrete steps toward further training. The survey thus highlights both current learning methods and interest in professional development; however, it does not allow for a systematic assessment of the quality or suitability of existing learning and training offerings.

Regulations and tools are in place in many areas; at the same time, employees also make use of external options they have chosen themselves.

Many employees report the existence of regulations and guidelines regarding the use of AI. A significant portion of active usage involves internal tools or those officially provided by the company; at the same time, employees also utilize external tools of their own choosing. This does not necessarily imply that regulations or specific instructions are being violated. The survey did not determine whether such usage is permitted, whether it contravenes internal policies, or the reasons why employees employ additional tools. The findings demonstrate that actual tool usage extends beyond the officially provided options.

Employee expectations go beyond merely having suitable tools and clear usage regulations. They place particular importance on transparent information regarding opportunities and risks, legal and ethical guidelines, and the provision of time and financial resources for training and learning. When it comes to additional support needs, the focus is on practical, work-related assistance. Access to appropriate tools and the availability of designated points of contact are also cited as key factors.

A clear majority also considers opportunities for participation to be important: 71 percent view the involvement of social partners as very or somewhat important when AI applications directly affect employees. Similarly, 74 percent rate workplace participation opportunities - such as feedback sessions and involvement in shaping AI processes - as very or somewhat important. The survey thus highlights the significance employees attach to these forms of participation. However, it does not provide information on the specific structure of participation within individual companies or the roles played by social partners in this context.

Overarching AI strategies are more visible than concrete initiatives to adapt work processes and develop the necessary skills.

The findings regarding management and strategic integration are based on a smaller subgroup of 87 executives and should therefore be interpreted with caution. Seventy-four percent of the executives surveyed are aware of a comprehensive or partial overarching AI strategy within their company. Forty-five percent report that there is comprehensive or partial planning for the skills and job profiles required in the future. Around one-third perceive a comprehensive or transparent approach - or at least a partially transparent one - to managing changes in organizational structures and work processes.

At the same time, the high proportion of "don't know" responses is striking. Many of the executives surveyed do not know whether planning for skills and profiles or transparent management of structural and process changes is in place. This does not necessarily mean that such planning is absent; it may simply be known only to specific roles, limited to certain areas, or not widely visible across the company. Thus, the overarching planning for AI implementation is more frequently visible to the executives surveyed than the planning regarding its consequences for skills, job profiles, organizational structures, and work processes.

The use of AI in management roles remains largely supportive and cautious. AI is more frequently employed for preparatory or communicative tasks - such as conversations, feedback, or team communication - while it is used less often for tasks that are more personal in nature or involve decision-making, such as recruitment, performance assessment, goal setting, or resource planning. The executives surveyed identify data protection and compliance, the safeguarding of confidential information, raising employee awareness, and quality assurance as the key challenges.

The longer-term repercussions for employment remain to be seen.

The study does not allow for a forecast regarding how many jobs will be created or lost due to AI. Above all, the survey shows that tasks, requirements, learning pathways, and professional profiles are changing. At the same time, literature and expert discussions indicate that the demand for labor within specific roles and profiles may shift. Entry-level employment warrants particular attention, as AI can support or take over the very tasks through which younger or less experienced employees have previously built up practical experience. Meanwhile, the overall demand for ICT specialists remains high. Therefore, the crucial factor is not merely the number of jobs, but also the skills, experience, and entry opportunities that will be in demand in the future.

Conclusion

The study reveals no uniform, AI-driven upheaval, but rather a gradual, task-specific transformation. For the vast majority of employees surveyed, AI is already part of their everyday working life. It is primarily used to provide support and offers many tangible benefits - particularly regarding productivity, professional assistance, and time savings.

However, these positive experiences do not automatically mean that work is becoming easier or less demanding overall. Time requirements and job demands do not necessarily move in the same direction; alongside productivity gains, employees face increased multitasking, greater work intensity, uncertainty regarding potential errors, and widespread reflection on their own professional futures.

Consequently, future developments will depend on more than just technical tools. Clear regulations and guidelines, secure and suitable applications, practical skills development, transparent information, and visible planning regarding future skills, roles, and work processes are equally important. While the study does not forecast job creation or job losses, it demonstrates that the structuring of tasks, learning, responsibility, and professional development is becoming central to the adoption of AI within the ICT sectors.

