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The Growing Use of AI in the Workplace

How Management and Works Councils Are Negotiating the Introduction and Use of AI Applications

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ABOUT THIS PAPER

This paper was produced as part of the research program of the "Working with Artificial Intelligence" research group at the Weizenbaum Institute. The research group examines the processes of the introduction, design, and use of AI technologies in companies, with a focus on the resulting changes in job content, work organization, skill structures, and employee participation. The research program includes case studies of companies, analyses of human-AI collaboration in laboratory experiments, and a company survey, which forms the basis of this paper.

ABOUT THE WEIZENBAUM INSTITUTE

The Weizenbaum Institute is a joint project funded by the German Federal Ministry of Research, Technology and Space (BMFTR) and the State of Berlin. It conducts interdisciplinary and basic research on the digital transformation of society and provides evidence- and value-based options for action in order to shape digitalization in a sustainable, self-determined and responsible manner.

Weizenbaum Discussion Paper

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\\ Summary of Key Findings

\ The "AI in the Workplace" survey, conducted in Germany for the second time in 2025 by the Weizenbaum Institute, shows that the use of AI applications is gaining momentum. Compared to 2024, the proportion of companies using at least one AI application in regular operations rose from 50% to 62% in 2025; an additional 12% had at least pilot projects for introducing AI in 2025. The use of AI applications is particularly widespread in the areas of IT, administration, and sales and marketing. Applications in human resources are increasing significantly, with 18% of the surveyed companies using them in regular operations and 7% in the pilot phase.

\ The primary goals of AI implementation remain the automation of work processes and the improvement of process efficiency. However, nearly two-thirds of the companies surveyed are experimenting with and introducing AI applications to test the technology's potential. The proportion of companies using AI assistants to support employees has risen significantly, to 57%.

\ The key challenges for companies lie in data governance (mitigating data protection risks and ensuring data quality), while there are signs of some improvement regarding the challenges of recruiting qualified personnel.

\ Management and works councils largely agree on the impact of AI on employment. An increase in skill requirements is seen as a key consequence. Two-thirds of the companies surveyed see no impact on employment, while about one-third note a slight decrease in jobs due to the use of AI. Works councils, however, fear a certain reduction in employees' scope for action and decision-making, as well as an increase in the transparency of individual work and performance; whereas, management perceives hardly any changes in this regard.

\ Three-quarters of the managers surveyed and two-thirds of the works council members see productivity gains resulting from AI. It is noteworthy, however, that only a minority of companies are translating these productivity gains into staff reductions. The primary focus is on leveraging AI's potential to improve product quality, reduce errors, and cut back on overtime and work intensity.

- When comparing the 2024 and 2025 surveys, we found that both managers and works council members report increased acceptance of AI use in the workplace, which may have been due to employees' rapidly growing personal experience with these technologies.
- With regard to the practice of co-determination in the introduction of AI systems, the 2025 survey—as in 2024—reveals a divide between a cooperative and a conflict-ridden co-determination landscape. Cooperative co-determination means regular and substantive involvement of works councils in technology implementation processes. In the conflict-ridden mode of co-determination, management does not regularly involve works councils, and conflicts thus typically arise regarding AI application pilot programs on several levels: their duration, the involvement of external expertise, and in terms of performance monitoring and data handling.
- At the same time, the 2025 survey shows that, compared to 2024, works councils have significantly better access to information and training on AI. Efforts to build expertise on AI within works councils have also greatly intensified. This is accompanied by increased communication on AI-related topics between works councils and the workforce.
- Noteworthy is the rise in company agreements related to AI. While only four companies reported having specialized AI agreements in the 2024 survey, that number rose to 31 in the 2025 survey. As AI becomes more widespread, the number of company agreements regulating IT systems in general is also increasing. AI is becoming an ever more important topic in the realm of employee participation.

Contents

1 Introduction **6**

2 Research Design **6**

3 Use of AI in the Workplace **8**
3.1 Objectives of AI Implementation 10
3.2 Challenges in Implementing AI 11

4 The Impact of AI on Work **13**
4.1 Harnessing the Productivity Potential of AI 14
4.2 Acceptance of AI 15

5 Works Councils and the Introduction of AI **16**
5.1 Works Council Members' Access to Information about AI 18
5.2 Building AI Expertise within the Works Council 19
5.3 Agreements on the Use of AI 20

6 Summary and Outlook **21**

References **22**

Imprint **23**

1 Introduction[1]

The growing prevalence of artificial intelligence (AI) applications is transforming the world of work. AI applications are increasingly finding their way into fields of work that involve a high proportion of planning and creative tasks. This development is creating new opportunities for automating and optimizing processes, as well as for supporting and assisting employees in their legacy work tasks.

The use of AI applications is thus becoming an increasingly important issue for management and works councils to address, and therefore a central topic for co-determination. With the European Union's AI Regulation, a powerful regulatory framework governing the use of AI has come into force, which is having a growing impact on the design, negotiation, and consultation processes surrounding the introduction and use of AI technologies in companies. This study is based on two survey waves involving 385 participating German companies in 2024 and 440 German companies in 2025. The survey focuses on four areas of inquiry:

1) For what purposes and in which areas do companies use AI applications?
2) How are works councils involved in the implementation of AI technologies, and to what extent do the perspectives of management and works councils on AI overlap or differ?
3) What impact do management and works councils see AI technologies having on the workplace?

The survey goes beyond existing studies in two key respects, thereby offering significant added value to the current discussion on AI in the workplace: First, the study provides a nuanced overview of the various applications and areas of use for AI, presenting an accurate picture of its deployment. Second, the study has the unique feature of combining both the perspectives of management and works councils, hence making it possible to analyze how AI applications may be designed within the co-determination system.

2 Research Design

This analysis combines the results of the first wave (385 companies) conducted in 2024 and the second wave (440 companies) conducted in 2025 of the German "AI in the Workplace" survey. Interviews with management were conducted at all companies, with the most appropriate contact person for questions regarding AI applications identified in each case (usually the executive board, plant management, technical management, or IT management). All surveyed companies had a works council; interviews with works council members (mostly works council chairs) were conducted in 224 cases in the first wave and in 233 cases in the second wave. The Umfragezentrum Bonn (uzbonn) was commissioned to conduct the telephone survey.

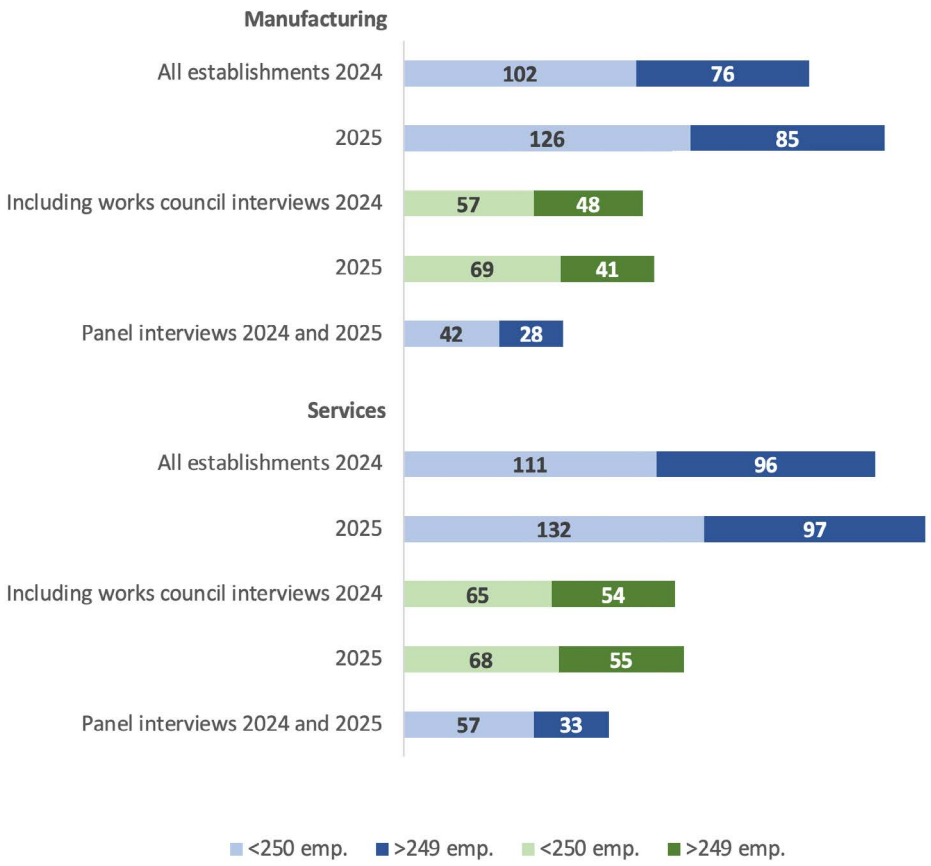
1 A German version of this report was published as Krzywdzinski and Wotschack (2026).

The survey is based on a stratified random sample. The focus was on larger companies in industries with greater potential for the use of AI applications. Quotas were established for the survey, with a random sample drawn from within each quota: First, approximately half of the surveyed companies were to have more than 250 employees, while the other half were to have between 50 and 249 employees. Larger companies are thus overrepresented, while small businesses, which currently rarely use AI applications, were not included. Second, the survey focused on a comparison between the manufacturing sector (specifically economic sectors C and D, i.e., the manufacturing industry and the energy sector—mining and construction were not included, as AI usage in these sectors has been minimal to date, according to current knowledge) and selected service sectors with particular potential for the use of AI (economic sectors G, H, J, K, and M: wholesale and retail trade; transportation and warehousing; information and communication; financial and insurance services; scientific and technical services). According to data from the German Federal Employment Agency, these selected economic sectors accounted for approximately 18.3 million jobs subject to social insurance contributions in 2025.

The two samples from 2024 and 2025 were largely similar in terms of sectoral composition, the proportion of medium-sized and large firms, and the distribution of employment by skill level.

In the second wave, 2025, an effort was made to re-survey as many of the 2024 cases as possible. This was successful in 160 cases. Comparative data for the years 2024 and 2025 are available for these cases. This subsample of firms surveyed again (panel subsample) differed only slightly from the sample of firms newly surveyed in 2025: The share of firms in the manufacturing sector was slightly lower in the panel subsample (44% versus 50%), while the share of firms in information and communication as well as technical and financial services was slightly higher (34% versus 26%); at the same time, the share of medium-sized enterprises with up to 250 employees was slightly higher (62% versus 57%) and, accordingly, the share of large enterprises was slightly lower. There were no differences in the composition of employment by skill level.

Figure 1: Breakdown of the Sample by Sector and Size



Note: Manufacturing includes economic sectors C and D, while services include economic sectors G, H, J, K, and M.

3 Use of AI in the Workplace

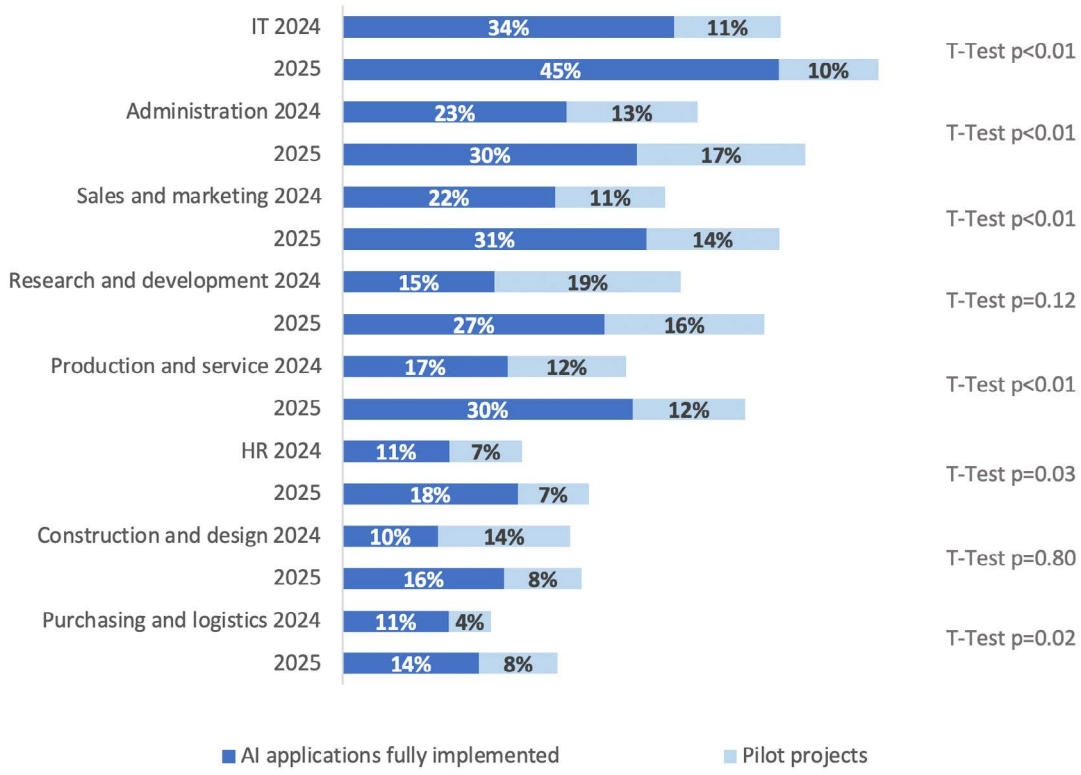
In our sample, we found a relatively high level of AI adoption. Noteworthy is the significant increase in reported AI usage between 2024 and 2025. In 2024, 49% of surveyed companies in the manufacturing sector and 51% of companies in the service sectors examined reported using at least one AI application in routine operations. In 2025, the figures were 62% in the manufacturing sector and 61% in the service sector—an increase of just over 10 percentage points. If we include companies that have at least one AI application in pilot operation, the share of companies using AI rose to 73% in the manufacturing sector and 75% in the service sectors surveyed by 2025.

We measured the use of AI by surveying specific AI applications across eight business areas, as shown in Figure 2. In human resources, for example, we asked about chatbots for employee inquiries and information provision, software for the internal pre-screening of applications in recruitment processes, or for skills analysis. This approach of asking specifics thus goes beyond analyses based on general questions such as “Do you use AI applications in your operations?”, which are often difficult to answer.

Figure 2 shows the overall use of AI applications across various business areas. AI was most commonly used in IT, for example in IT security (such as monitoring networks and data streams) or to assist with programming—55% of the companies surveyed had such an application in regular operation or in a pilot project by 2025. Applications were also very common in administration, such as in the automation of data management processes or as support for the creation of analyses and reports (47%), as well as in sales and marketing (45%).

Human resources, the area where the use of AI is the subject of particularly heated debate, was one of the business functions where AI adoption had been relatively low so far, but where usage is growing rapidly. In 2024, 18% of the companies surveyed reported using AI in HR; by 2025, that figure had risen to 25%. About 15% of companies reported using chatbots for employee inquiries to HR, and about 11% reported using AI for the initial screening of job applications.

Figure 2: Use of AI Applications by Business Area



Source: Management interviews. Only those companies that have a corresponding business area are included. This results in a slight discrepancy compared to the presentation in the 2024 report.

The trends shown in Figure 2 could be related to both an increase in AI usage and changes in the sample. An additional clue is provided by focusing solely on the 160 companies that we were able to survey in both 2024 and 2025. These companies were somewhat more cautious in their use of AI, and the changes observed in this group differed slightly from those in the overall sample. Here, AI usage has increased only slightly in IT (from 45% to 49%), in sales and marketing (from 39% to 40%), in administration and management (from 37% to 38%), in human resources (from 16% to 17%), and in procurement and logistics (from 15%

to 16%). There was a larger increase in AI usage in research and development (from 30% to 41%), production and service provision (from 29% to 36%), and engineering and design (from 15% to 22%). This may be related to the fact that the subsample of companies surveyed twice includes a slightly lower proportion of large companies. At the same time, however, the trend toward increasing AI use was confirmed here as well.

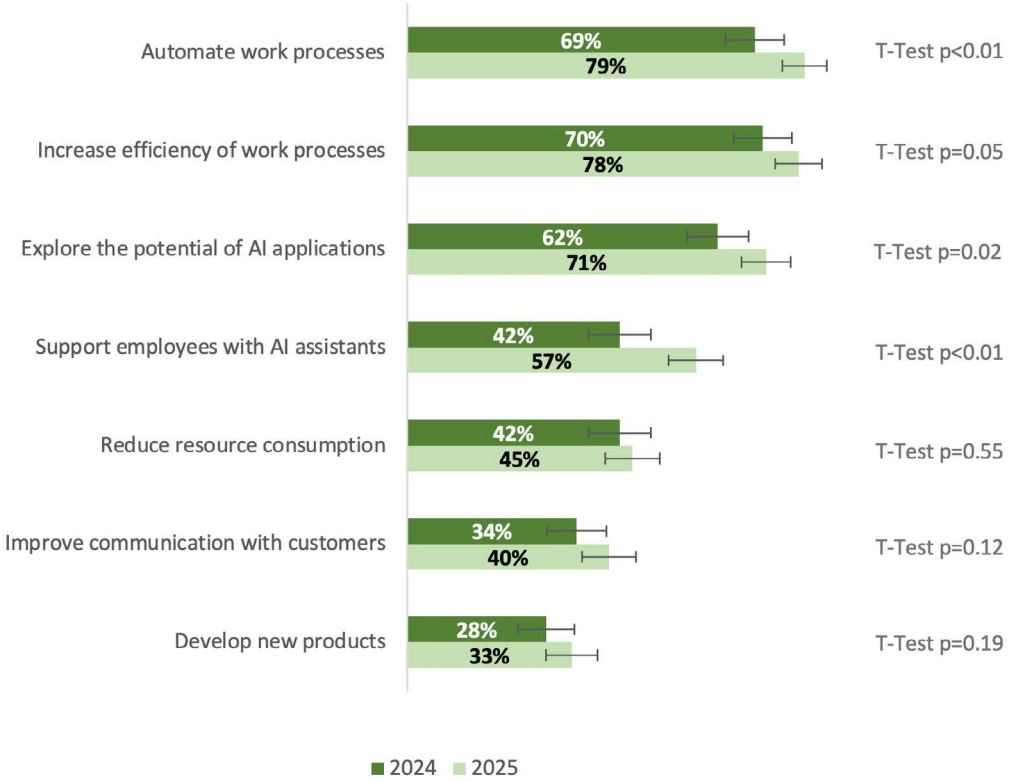
It should be noted that there were also cases in which companies had discontinued the use of AI following a pilot project. In the 2025 survey, this was most frequently reported for applications in IT (40 companies), human resources (21 companies), and procurement (15 companies). AI is being tested in many companies, and, in quite a few cases, it turns out that expectations for this new technology were too high and the hoped-for added value does not materialize.

3.1 Objectives of AI Implementation

When it comes to the objectives of AI adoption, automation and increased efficiency clearly dominate. The importance of these goals has risen between 2024 and 2025 and was emphasized by nearly 80% of companies in each year (Figure 3). However, 71% of companies also stated in 2025 that they intended to experiment with AI first and test its potential. Noteworthy is the sharp increase in the goal of supporting employees with AI assistants (from 42% to 57% of companies). The growing experience of employees and companies with the use of chatbots and generative AI certainly plays a role here.

It is striking that only a minority of companies have reported using AI for new product development. This could indicate that the potential of AI to support creative and design activities has not yet been fully realized.

Figure 3: Objectives for the Use of AI Applications

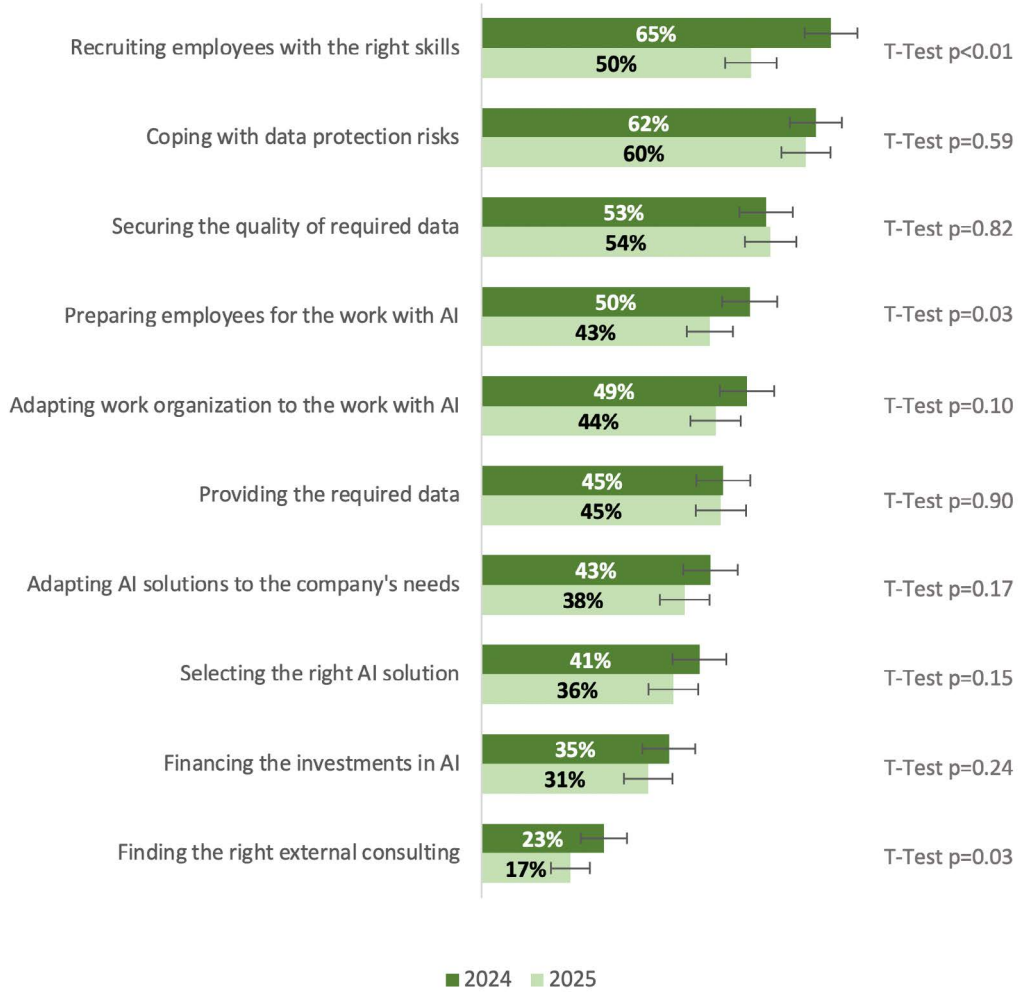


Source: Management interviews. The 2024 sample includes 247 companies using AI, the 2025 sample 325 companies. Error bars indicate a 95% confidence interval.

3.2 Challenges in Implementing AI

A notable finding regarding the challenges of implementing and using AI applications is the reduced difficulty in recruiting qualified personnel (Figure 4). In 2025, 50% of the surveyed companies—significantly fewer than in 2024—reported problems in this area. Challenges related to employee training have also decreased. By contrast, there has been little change in the challenges of data governance, particularly safeguarding against data protection risks and ensuring the necessary data quality for AI systems. These remain the greatest challenges for companies. The selection, adaptation, financing, and consulting involved in implementing AI applications, however, continue to be described as difficult by only a minority of companies.

Figure 4: Challenges in the Implementation and Use of AI Applications



Source: Management interviews. The 2024 survey includes 247 companies using AI; the 2025 survey, 325 companies. Error bars indicate a 95% confidence interval.

There were hardly any changes in terms of cooperation partners between 2024 and 2025. When it comes to the implementation and use of AI applications, 61% of the surveyed companies was working closely with specialized software companies in 2025 (35% with primarily German companies and 26% with primarily foreign companies). 37% collaborated with consulting firms (33% with German and 4% with foreign firms) and 30% with research institutions (29% with German and 1% with foreign institutions). Consulting support for the implementation of AI systems was not considered a major issue. It is also noteworthy that the surveyed companies predominantly rely on German partners when implementing AI systems—both in terms of software providers and consulting. Despite the dominance of US companies in the AI sector, this suggests that a functional AI ecosystem is emerging in Germany.

4 The Impact of AI on Work

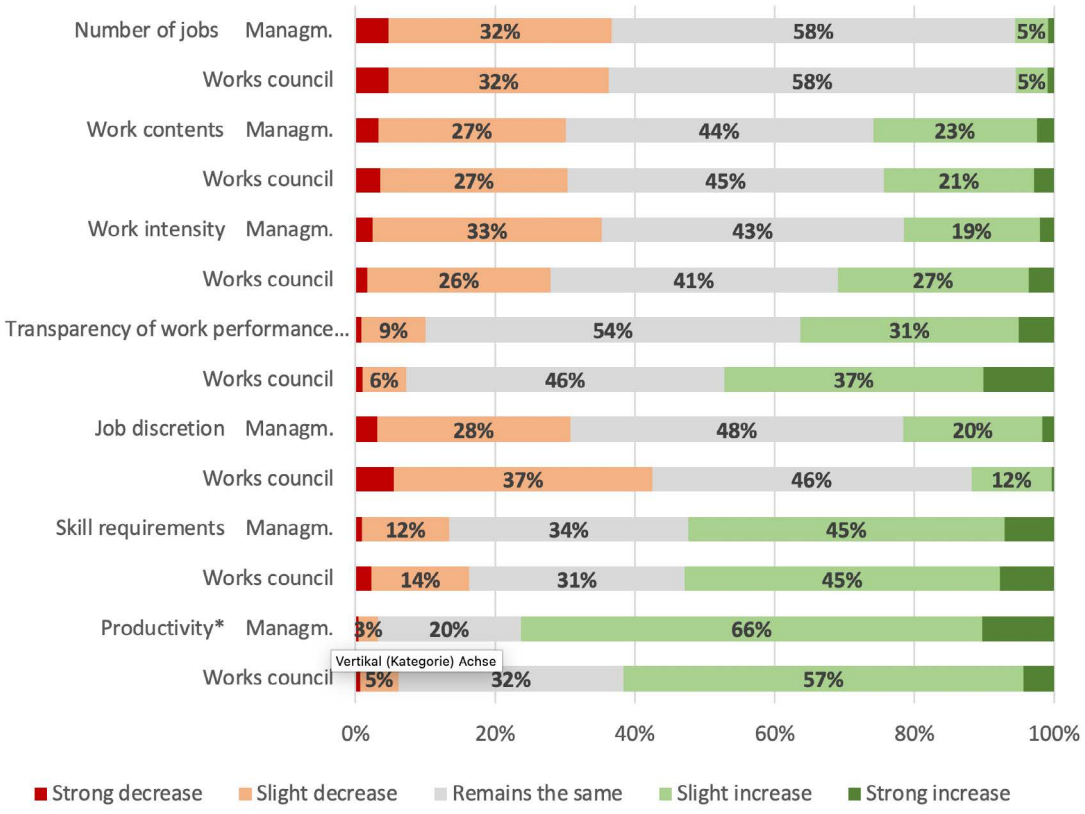
As Figure 5 shows, management and works councils were in relative agreement regarding the impact of AI on work. This generally holds true overall (based on the average across all companies); at the individual company level, however, the perceptions of the two parties often diverged.

Management and works councils largely agreed on the impact of AI on employment. A clear majority did not expect AI to have any impact in this area, though one-third feared a slight decline in employment. Management and works councils also agreed that AI will lead to higher skill requirements but that the scope of job duties will remain largely unchanged.

There are minor differences in terms of work intensity, transparency of performance, and employees' decision-making autonomy. Generally speaking, a majority of managers and works council members did not expect AI to bring about many changes. At the same time, the group that anticipated an increase in work intensity and performance transparency, as well as a decrease in decision-making autonomy, was slightly larger among works council members than among managers.

Differences are also evident when it comes to productivity. While a majority of both managers and works council members were convinced that AI leads to increased productivity, this group was significantly larger among managers (76%) than among works council members (62%).

Figure 5: Perceived Impacts of AI on Work by Management and Works Councils (2024 and 2025 Combined)



Source: Interviews with management and the works council. Man. = Management, WC = Works Council. *Asked only in 2025.

Overall, these findings paint a mixed picture. A clear majority of the managers and works council members surveyed saw as yet only minor changes to work processes due to AI, and they perceived its effects as generally positive. However, concerns regarding jobs, work intensity, decision-making autonomy, and transparency vis-a-vis employee performance were expressed by a significant minority of 25–35%. This underscores the need for close monitoring of these developments to identify necessary support for works councils or potential regulatory requirements.

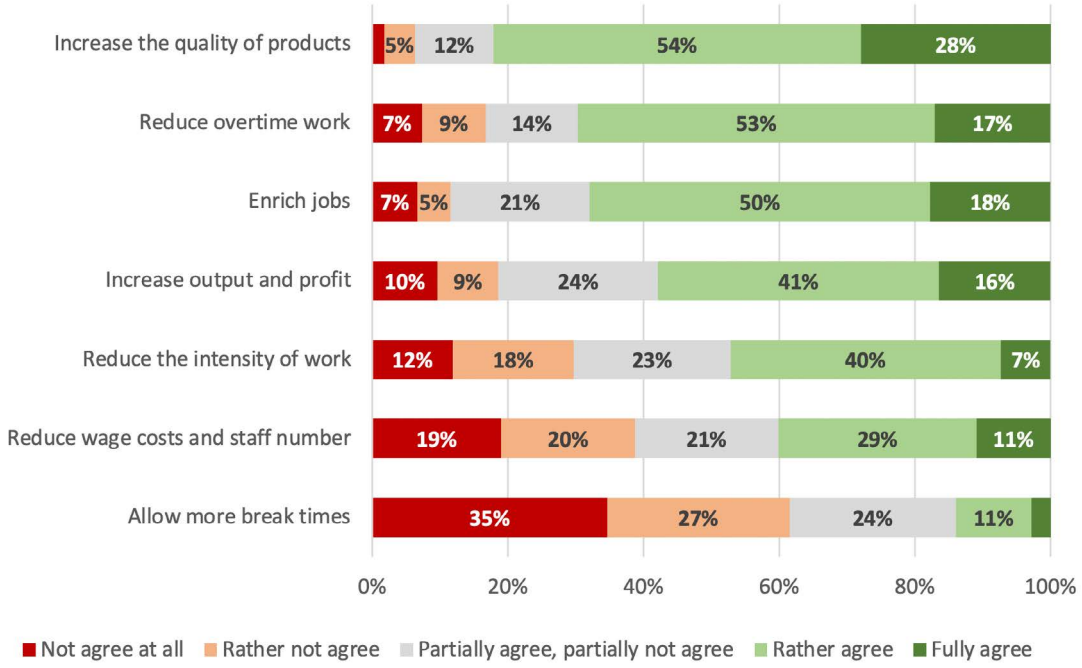
4.1 Harnessing the Productivity Potential of AI

The impact of AI on productivity is currently a hotly debated topic. Figure 5 shows that the managers and works council members we surveyed had very optimistic expectations regarding productivity gains. At the same time, there were differences across industries. The most skeptical were companies in the retail and logistics sectors—yet even here, approximately two-thirds (regardless of company size) expected productivity gains from AI. Smaller companies in the manufacturing sector and larger companies in the technical and financial services sectors were more optimistic—here, just under three-quarters anticipated productivity gains from AI. The most optimistic were larger companies in the manufacturing sector as well as smaller companies in the fields of information and communication, and technical and financial services—here, 85–90% of companies anticipated AI-driven productivity gains.

What stands out is the stark contrast in perceptions regarding productivity gains and employment trends—while two-thirds of managers expected productivity gains from the use of AI, only about one-third reported actual AI-related job losses, and none on a massive scale. This is an important point in public debate, where the productivity potential of AI is often interpreted as foreboding negative effects on jobs. What the debate overlooks is the fact that the productivity potential of AI can be utilized in different ways.

This point is illustrated in Figure 6. In the 2025 survey, we asked management representatives how AI-driven productivity gains were being utilized. Among companies that use AI and see productivity gains, 82% reported that the time saved is then invested in improving products and eliminating errors. In 70% of cases, productivity gains reduced overtime, meaning work is saved without negatively impacting employment. 68% used productivity gains to create more challenging jobs, and a significant 47% to reduce work intensity. In “only” 40% of cases were productivity gains translated into staff reductions. While this is a significant proportion, it is also clear that, in many cases, the potential of AI instead is being invested in improving products, increasing output, and, in some instances, reducing overtime and work intensity. Equating productivity gains with job cuts is incorrect.

Figure 6: Realizing the Productivity Potential of AI (2025)



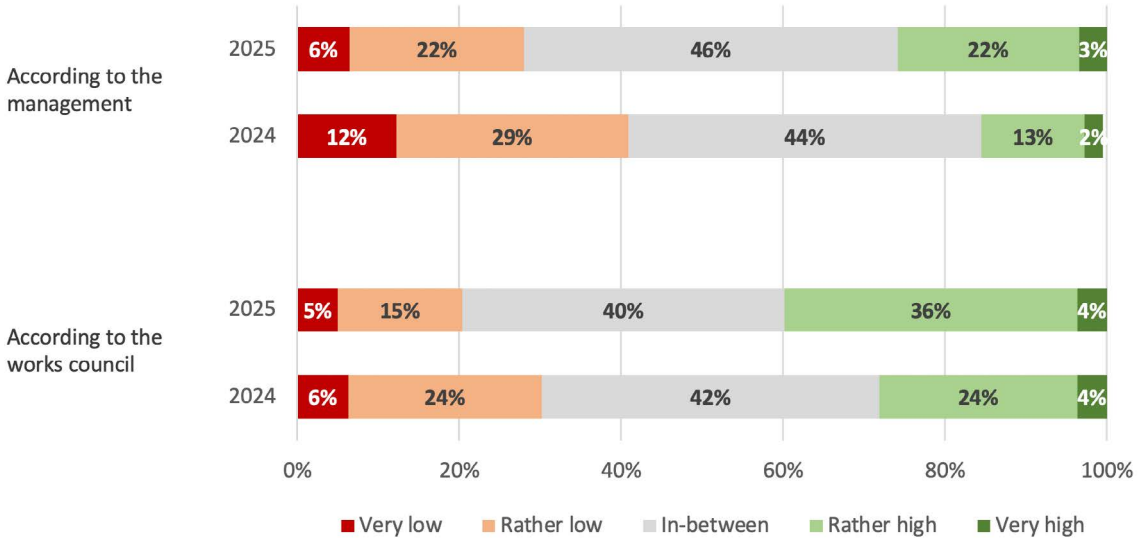
Source: Management interviews. Only companies that use AI and report productivity gains from AI.

4.2 Acceptance of AI

The ways in which AI's potential is being utilized, as described above, may explain why our survey shows an increase in the acceptance of AI applications in the workplace. This trend toward growing acceptance was confirmed in both management and works council interviews, although works councils generally rated acceptance higher than management does. The proportion of managers interviewed who perceived a rather high or very high level of acceptance of AI applications among employees rose from 15% in the 2024 survey to 25% in the 2025 survey. In the case of works councils, this proportion rose from 28% to 40%. This picture is also confirmed when we look solely at those companies that we were able to survey in both 2024 and 2025. Here, too, both management and works councils reported increased acceptance of AI use among employees.

There are still significant differences in acceptance across industries and occupational groups. Acceptance was significantly higher in the information and communication sector, as well as in technical and financial services, than in manufacturing, retail, and logistics. In addition, companies with a higher proportion of employees holding a tertiary education degree tended to show greater acceptance of AI use.

Figure 7: Employee Acceptance of AI Implementation from the Perspective of Management and the Works Council (2024 and 2025)



Source: Interviews with management and the works council. The changes between 2024 and 2025 are statistically significant for both management and works council interviews (Mann-Whitney test, $p < 0.01$).

The acceptance of AI implementation in the workplace has also been confirmed by other studies. For example, the 2025 Weizenbaum Report (Strippel et al., 2025, p. 15) shows that people view the use of AI in the workplace significantly more positively than, say, the role of AI in the public sphere, where debates about the manipulation of public opinion by AI bots and the issue of deepfakes shape perceptions of AI. The growing acceptance in the workplace may also be linked to the rapidly increasing private use of AI chatbots, which many people also use informally for work-related tasks (Arntz et al., 2025). As experience with the possibilities of AI grows, so does acceptance of the technology.

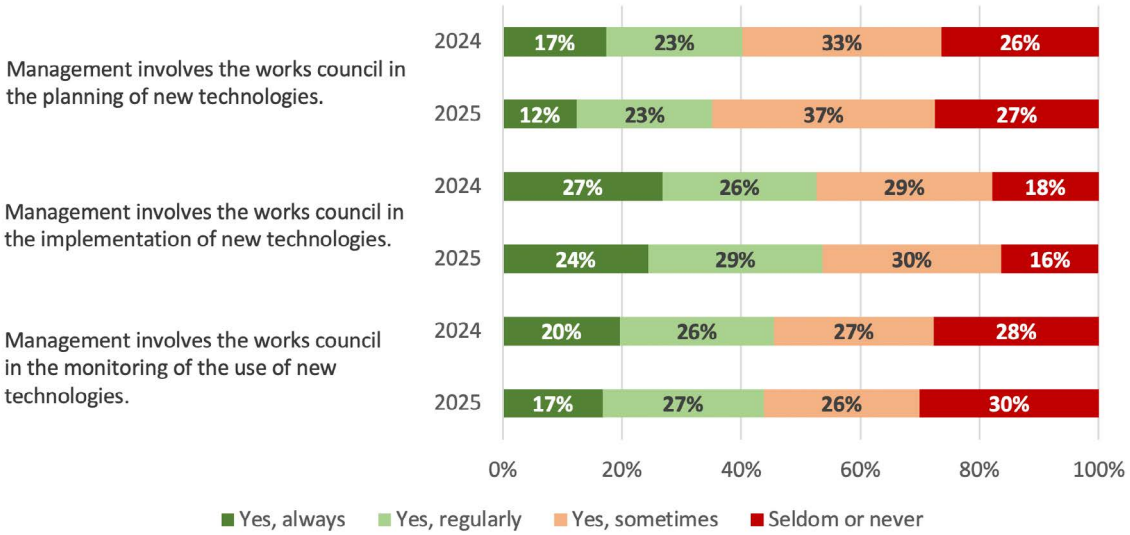
5 Works Councils and the Introduction of AI

With regard to cooperation between management and works councils, the 2025 survey confirms the findings from 2024, which indicate that we can identify two distinct worlds of co-determination (Krzywdzinski, 2024). About half of the works councils reported cooperative relationships with management (Figure 8). The 2025 survey shows that 53% of works councils were involved in the introduction of new technologies; 44% were involved in monitoring technology use; and a significant 35% were consulted during the planning of new technologies. Involvement in the planning phase, however, was significantly weaker across the board than in the immediate implementation process of new technologies. This is an area where it is important to expand co-determination, because key design decisions are made during this phase.

On the flipside, the other half of the works councils reported a lack of involvement in technology planning, implementation, or oversight. We refer to this as the conflict-ridden world of co-determination, because under these conditions, even the legally guaranteed rights of works councils must be fought for time and again.

Both forms of employee participation were found in all the industries studied. We found the cooperative form of employee participation somewhat more frequently in larger companies.

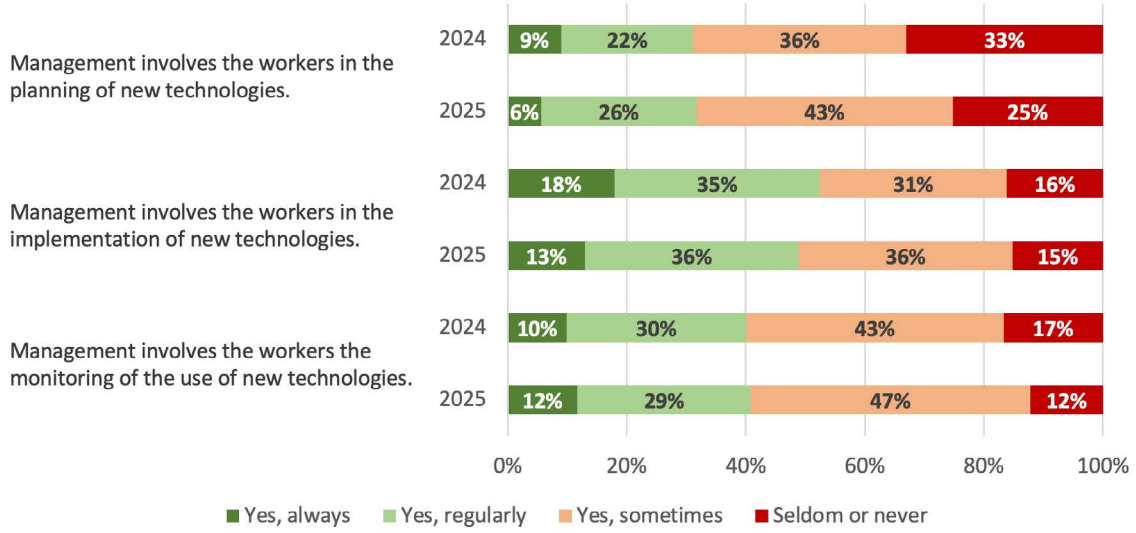
Figure 8: Involvement of Works Councils in the Introduction of New Technology (2024 and 2025)



Source: Works council interviews. Differences between 2024 and 2025 are not statistically significant (Mann-Whitney test).

As Figure 9 shows, the picture regarding employee involvement mirrors that of works council involvement. The 2025 survey revealed that employees were brought into the implementation of new technologies in 49% of companies, consulted on monitoring technology use in 41% of companies, and participated in planning new technologies in 32% of companies. We had already reported on and analyzed this in detail in the report on the first survey wave in 2024 (Krzywdzinski, 2024). This revealed a clear correlation between the involvement of the works council and employee participation, as well as a connection between such involvement and the acceptance of AI technologies among employees.

Figure 9: Employee Involvement in Technology Implementation (2024 and 2025)



Source: Works council interviews. Differences between 2024 and 2025 are not statistically significant (Mann-Whitney test).

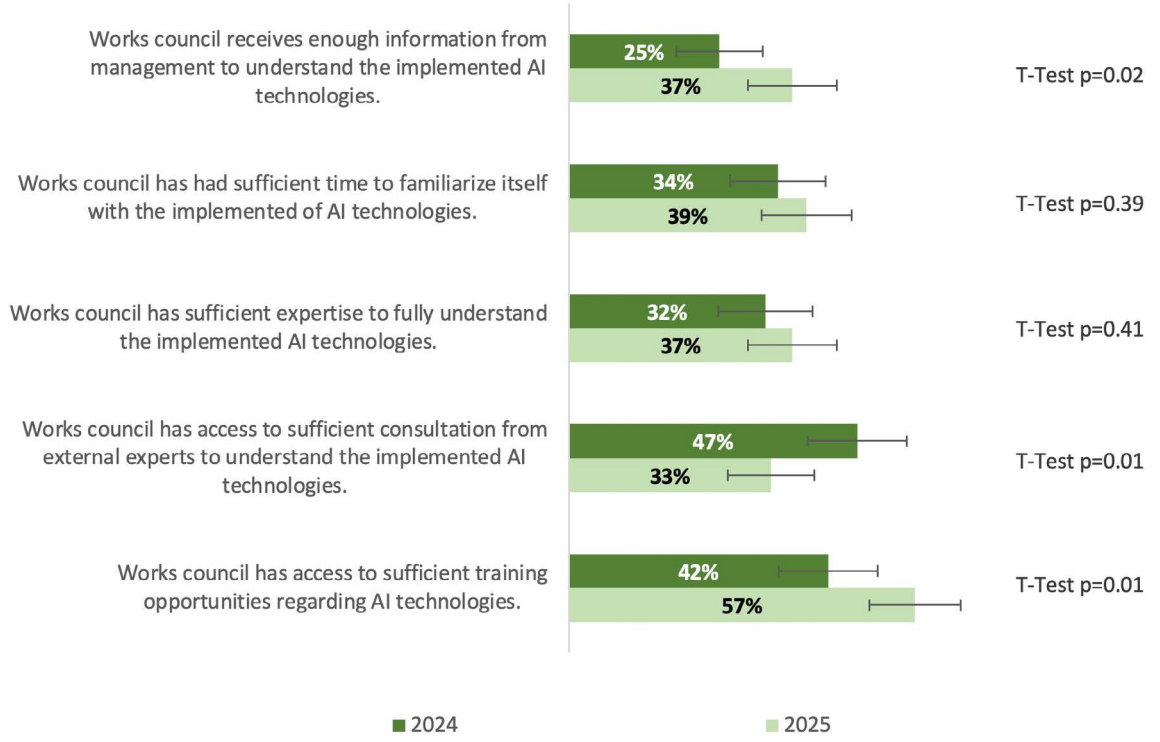
5.1 Works Council Members' Access to Information about AI

There was a notable change between 2024 and 2025 in works council members' access to information about AI. As Figure 10 shows, the proportion of works council members who somewhat or strongly agreed that they had received sufficient information from management to understand the AI technologies in use rose from 25% to 37%. The proportion of works council members who reported sufficient training opportunities increased from 42% to 57%. There have been only minor and statistically insignificant changes regarding the time available to works council members to engage with AI technologies and their personal expertise. However, from the works councils' perspective, access to external consulting on the introduction of AI has deteriorated. These changes are also confirmed when we consider only the subsample that we surveyed in both 2024 and 2025.

We assume that the improvements in access to information and training are linked to the intensifying public debate on AI, which is raising management's awareness and prompting them to disseminate relevant information in order to strengthen acceptance and expertise within companies. In addition, training opportunities on AI topics are on the rise. Another possible explanation is the EU's AI Regulation, which has been in effect since 2024 and requires companies to offer training on basic AI knowledge to employees who work with AI. The increase in such measures may also lead to improved access to information for works councils down the line.

It remains unclear why we are seeing such a significant decline in perceived access to external consulting. One possible explanation is that, as companies increasingly adopt AI, the need for practical and context-specific consulting is growing, while general consulting services are increasingly viewed as insufficient (or as already covered by available training programs). This would imply that there are still bottlenecks regarding specialized consulting on the various forms and application scenarios of AI.

Figure 10: Works Council Members' Access to Information Resources on AI (2024 and 2025)



Source: Interviews with works councils at companies that use AI. The error bars represent the 95% confidence interval.

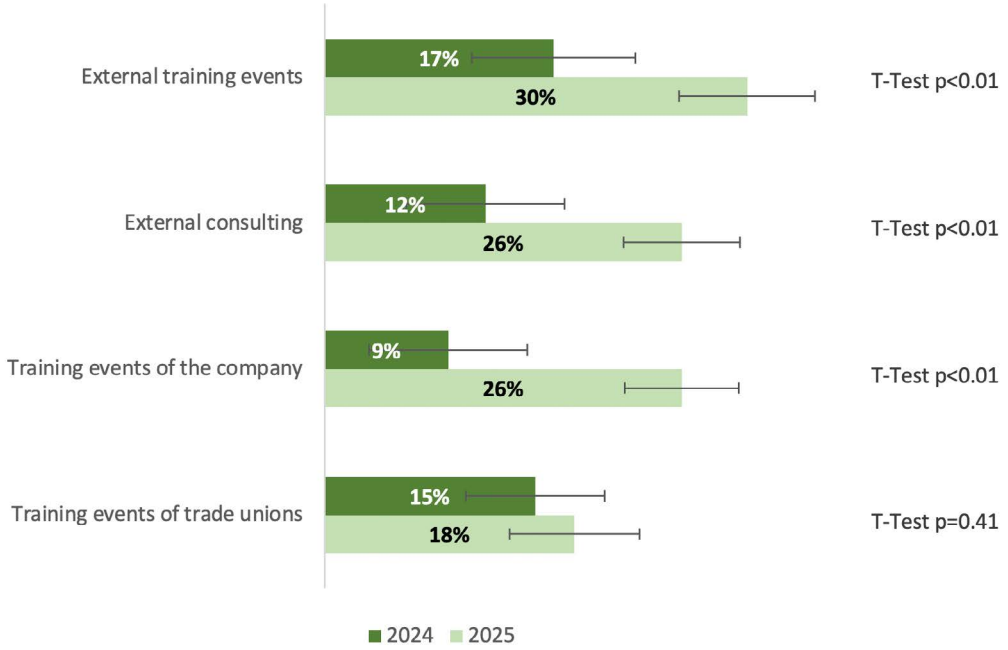
However, as the use of AI increases, conflicts are arising between works councils and management over how to define AI and which applications should be classified as AI. In the 2024 survey, 22% of works council members stated that the definition of AI is a point of contention between management and works councils; in the 2025 survey, this figure had already risen to 28%. Such ambiguities stem, on the one hand, from the nature of the matter: AI is a highly diverse technology that can be used in a wide variety of application scenarios. On the other hand, such conflicts could be related to the fact that the Works Council Modernization Act, which came into force in 2021, gives works councils the option to seek external expertise—funded by the company—on AI technologies being introduced at the company. Due to the costs of such expertise, differing views may arise regarding which technologies and applications are covered. The options provided by the Works Council Modernization Act regarding the engagement of external expertise were utilized by 16% of works councils in the 2024 survey and by 17% in the 2025 survey.

5.2 Building AI Expertise within the Works Council

To exert a long-term influence on the adoption and use of AI in companies, it will be crucial for works councils to leverage their access to information and knowledge. The extent to which they can build expertise within the council will determine future involvement. Here, too, changes are already evident during the period under review. The number of works councils that had taken no measures at all to build expertise in the field of AI fell from 70% in 2024 to 51% in 2025.

Figure 11 shows the key measures taken by works councils. The top measure was the use of external training programs, which were utilized by 30% of the surveyed works councils in 2025, followed by external consulting (26%) and in-house training events (26%). The participation in union-organized events remained largely unchanged between 2024 and 2025, with 18% of works councils reporting participation in 2025.

Figure 11: Measures to Build AI Expertise in Works Councils (2024 and 2025)



Source: Works council interviews. The error bars represent the 95% confidence interval.

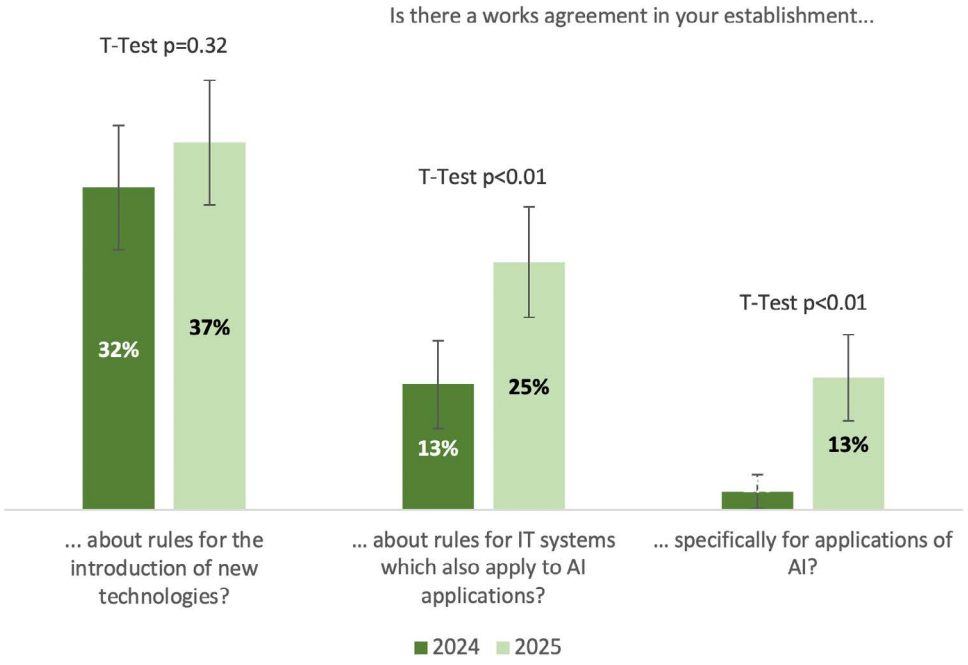
The intensification of capacity-building within works councils is also accompanied by more frequent communication between works councils and their workforces regarding AI. In the 2025 survey, 45% of works councils reported that they had engaged with employees regarding the use of AI as part of their involvement in specific software projects. 28% had engaged with employees during company events. 33% had already addressed the topic of AI during works council meetings. This represented a significant increase in communication between works councils and their workforces regarding AI compared to 2024.

5.3 Agreements on the Use of AI

Companies' growing experimentation with and adoption of AI applications is ultimately reflected in the development workplace agreements with the works councils. As Figure 12 shows, the proportion of companies reporting agreements on the use of IT systems in general, as well as specialized agreements on the use of AI, has increased significantly. The latter development is particularly noteworthy. While only four companies reported having a specific AI agreement in the 2024 survey, that number had already risen to 31 in the 2025 survey.

To rule out the possibility that these shifts were related to the different samples across the two survey waves, we examined the changes in the subsample of companies that we surveyed in both 2024 and 2025. Similar to the overall sample, there was no change in general agreements regarding processes for introducing new technologies—in both years, 29 companies reported having such agreements. The number of companies with agreements on rules for the use of IT systems, however, had risen from 17 to 23. The number of companies that had concluded specific agreements for the use of AI had even risen from 2 to 12. The changes in the overall sample thus reflect a real increase in agreements regulating the use of AI within companies.

Figure 12: Management-Works Council Agreements on Regulating the Use of AI (2024 and 2025)



Source: Works council interviews. The error bars represent the 95% confidence interval.

6 Summary and Outlook

The use of AI in the workplace is growing rapidly. While automation and increased efficiency remain the primary goals, companies are also showing growing interest in using AI assistants to support their employees. This clearly reflects the effects of widespread private use of generative AI.

The key challenge in implementing AI is the internal provision of data, which faces obstacles due to fragmented software landscapes as well as a lack of expertise. Data protection issues also remain a challenge for companies. Notably, however, problems with recruiting qualified personnel for AI implementation have become significantly less pronounced between 2024 and 2025, which may be related to the cooling of the labor market.

While companies are very optimistic about the productivity gains AI can bring, it is also striking that such gains do not necessarily lead to job losses. Only a minority of the managers and works council members surveyed foresaw negative employment effects from AI. The public debate's focus on job losses caused by AI is often based on simplistic examples, but it fails to recognize the dynamics in many companies where the use of AI and productivity gains are not used to cut jobs, but rather to improve product quality, increase output, and, in some cases, reduce overtime. This explains why the present study reveals a growing acceptance of AI use in companies.

To further strengthen such developments, effective employee participation is essential. The 2025 survey wave also shows that two distinct "worlds" of employee participation continue to exist. About half of the companies surveyed reported cooperative employee participation practices, while the other half reported conflicts between management and works councils regarding the introduction of AI. The benefits of cooperative co-determination relationships lie not only in a smoother AI implementation but also in greater acceptance among employees.

Between 2024 and 2025, works councils' access to information and training improved significantly. This may be attributed both to the generally much greater attention being paid to the topic of AI—and the resulting increase in internal training activities at many companies—as well as to the requirements of the EU's AI Regulation regarding internal training. Works councils are increasingly utilizing these opportunities to build expertise, as evidenced by the rising number of works agreements regarding the introduction of IT systems and, in particular, AI applications. The practice of co-determination is increasingly addressing the topic of AI.

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