ONE PAGER

Fairness and Equality at the Workplace and how AI can help

Despite all the effort gender equality in the workforce is losing ground

Recent global, European and country-specific studies have shown that despite all the effort, gender equality in the workplace has not been progressing. And COVID-19 didn't help. Even though the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated the pace and depth of digitalisation, the situation of women in employment worsened significantly.

According to the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report, the CEE region is not at the forefront of gender equality. The 2021 report ranks Lithuania on place 8, Serbia on 19 and Latvia on 20. However, for instance Poland ranks 75th and the Czech Republic 78th, while Romania is 88th and Hungary 99th on the list.

In the IT industry specifically, the 2020 issue of the WEF report found that women represent just 26% of the data and AI workforce.

The 2021 study Gender aspects related to the security of people of retirement age by Delloite for the Confederation of Industry of the Czech Republic focused on a similar topic and found that in up to 90% of all jobs women earn lower wages than men. The differences are largest in the highest-paid jobs, such as managers, specialists and technical and professional workers.

IBM's recently released study Women in Leadership 2021 shows gender equality is still not a top business priority for 70% of organisations. Moreover, the study reveals the number of women in the leadership pipeline is declining, with fewer women hold senior positions in 2021 compared to 2019.

The issue of inequality has been well demonstrated in equal pay for equal work. While the right to equal pay for equal work has been enshrined in the European legal system for more than 60 years, women still earn less than men on average. The European Commission is reacting to this fact by introducing binding measures related to equal pay in its draft Pay Transparency Directive as a part of its Strategy for gender equality.

At the same time, the EU finds itself in the midst of a digital transformation and has high ambitions to help shaping the world in advanced and human-centric technologies. Investments to boost AI development, though Next Generation Plans and Digital Europe programme are coupled with the proposal of sweeping regulation.

Inequality is not only unfair. It can influence organization culture, innovation and progress. So how we can tackle this issue? How can technologies like AI help? And is the EU ready?

- How can we reverse the trend of equality losing ground?
- What are the main issues companies have to tackle in this area?
- What is the role of employers, employees and governments in this process?
- How can fairer AI technology help achieve equal opportunities?
- How can the ecosystem of policy measures and regulation in AI that is being created gain the EU leadership in using advanced technology to achieve its goals in equal opportunities?