

# July Newsletter

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**UNIONS21**  
building tomorrow's unions

## BULLETIN



### SPOTLIGHT ON

## The future of work: Everything you need to know from Unions 21 annual conference: Part Two

In our [first Unions 21 conference podcast](#), we covered how to engage young people in unions, successful social partnership in the NHS and how the lack of collective voice makes the UK anxious.

And in this second and final podcast, we cover the future of work, considering how unions should embrace AI and digital projects.

Sue Ferns, Unions 21 Chair and Senior Deputy General Secretary at Prospect, introduces the session with a Unions 21 poll, which found one in five workers say they're more pessimistic about their career prospects than a year ago. In welcoming the panel, Sue asks: "Should we be worried about the rise of automation?"

Exploring the ethics and power of data and artificial intelligence as the driver of the fourth industrial revolution, Ivana Bartoletti, Women Leading in AI and Fabian's Women's Network Chair, says there's no corner of our lives untouched

by AI, from our phones to our insurance policies, affecting jobs and therefore redefining geopolitics. Ivana calls for greater understanding, assessment and regulation from policy-makers and unions to ensure rapid change is transparent and positive for society and for workers.

Gill Dix, Head of Workplace Policy, ACAS, reveals ACAS's collective conciliation cases increasingly centre on the impact of technological transformation, with jobs changing due to automation, where even small scale development has wreaked havoc on workplaces, straining employment relationships.

Laying down a challenge to unions to think about new models of organising, Anthony Painter, Head of Action and Research Centre, RSA, talks about the need for change to get ahead of increasing precarity at work and growing use of new technologies which will replace jobs.

In our session on digital transformation, Natasha Kizzie, Industry Manager, Google LCS UK, reveals organisations are obsessed with digital change and customer experience, yet so many are not set up for the speed the digital age demands, often slowing down projects with bureaucratic or hierarchical processes, often frightened of failure rather than embracing experimentation. Natasha urges unions' digital teams to use their data on member engagement to convince decision-makers to change ways of working.

Christina Colclough, Uni Global Union, explains how Project Spotlight is turning organisations' monitoring of workplace activity on its head - while an employer measures worker productivity, the union records work done during commuting times, breaks, evenings and weekends, even in the middle of the night, and then negotiates changes on the back of the data collected.

Talking through the TUC's Megaphone project, Anthony Hayes outlines another way unions can use digital technology, via online petitions, to reach workers who want to make their voices heard at work.

Launching Unions 21's own online petition, WorksForUs, Becky Wright, Executive Director, explains how we're experimenting with digital engagement in non-unionised workplaces to sign workers up, then supporting them to make changes by linking them to a union.

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## Download Podcast



### More views

## Hear more from our speakers

- [Our Exec Director Becky Wright's blog on Organising](#)
- [Our podcast with Christina Colclough of Uni Global Union](#)
- [Our podcast with Chief Executive of NHS Employers Danny Mortimer](#)
- [Professor Melanie Simms latest book on the future for trade unions](#)

Catch up on the latest opinions on collective voice, [click here](#)

Get involved in a dynamic organisation developing practical solutions to tackle the challenges facing unions in the 21st century.



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