



PAITool

QUALITATIVE ASSESSMENT OF EMPLOYMENT BARRIERS



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INTRODUCTION

The **main aim** of the PAITool project is to develop and test new flexible opportunities for VET on Artificial Intelligence, which will **support SME staff in adapting to and enacting digital transformation.**

The motivation of PAITool is thus to **strengthen** the competitiveness of European SMEs, by facilitating the increased uptake and integration of AI systems and tools in business practices. This involves **upskilling** the European workforce with appropriate digital skills and competences in the field of AI to promote the digital transformation of European SMEs.

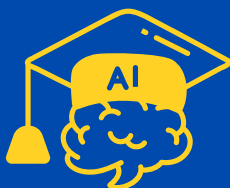
In line with this, PAITool is interested in assessing the **challenges faced** by unemployed people when seeking jobs, focusing on low-skilled or medium-skilled workers who need reskilling or upskilling to adapt to advancements in AI and automation, to assess why opportunities for upskilling are not being exploited.

The Qualitative Assessment of Employment Barriers thus provides a background to the study on employment barriers in Slovakia and Malta. It also summaries the results of the qualitative assessment carried out in Slovakia and Malta. The study was carried out by the Slovak Center for Digital Innovations (SCDI) and AcrossLimits, based in Slovakia and Malta respectively.

PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS

There is a shortage of up to **500,000 IT professionals** in the EU labour market. In **Slovakia** and **Malta**, too, **demand far outweighs supply**, and this problem will grow in the future.

On the other hand, **upskilling** and **retraining** can mitigate this trend, especially for university graduates in other fields that are not in such high demand (such as hotel management, business economics and management, journalism, psychology, arts, culture and international relations).



In one of the surveys mentioned in our report, employers expressed that **formal education is not a key criterion** when selecting a new employee. They value relevant and longer-term work experience more than formal education.

Women represent up to 45% of the Slovak workforce and most of them have a university degree. Working in a supportive environment (including support for women mothers) is an important determinant of women's success in IT. More complicated access to job positions and strong hierarchical boundaries are already identified barriers.

The survey “What IT professionals want” regularly evaluates the needs of IT professionals in the workplace. According to the latest survey, an attractive salary, a good boss and flexibility motivate most IT professionals and more than 60% of IT professionals are de-motivated by salary stagnation, improper project management and inappropriate team management.



On the other side of the curtain, the qualitative research conducted by SCDI and AcrossLimits indicates that many applicants for IT positions, in addition to the lack of experience, do not possess the necessary personal attitude: responsibility, active development of their IT skills, any self-development activities or the ability to communicate.

For entry-level (junior) positions, it would be sufficient to complete training courses to develop specific IT skills, but the obstacle is often the “personal attitude” of the job candidate.

Both Slovakia and Malta face some similar challenges. The labour market increasingly demands a workforce that is digitally skilled and able to learn new technologies. This applies not only to young people entering the workforce, but also to people who have been employed for several decades. They will also have to find ways to increase their ability to work with computers and information systems. This puts various forms of lifelong learning in a special position, including projects such as PAITool.

HOW PAITool CAN CONTRIBUTE TO OVERCOMING THESE BARRIERS

The aim of the PAITool project is to **provide SMEs with tools** to become more competitive in an increasingly digitised and AI-dependent labour market.

These tools will also be useful for individuals who would like to find new employment but are struggling to do so because of their insufficient knowledge of AI. Therefore, secondary aim of PAITool is to provide tools which can help individuals to overcome the various barriers faced when looking for employment.

WWW.PAITOOLEU



The PAITool course, **available for free** on the PAITool website, focuses on the following topics where Artificial Intelligence can be of use in labour market processes.

1. Artificial Intelligence in industrial production
2. Quality control in industrial production
3. Predictive maintenance
4. Energy management
5. Marketing and sales support
6. Online sales
7. User and customer support
8. Automation of non-manufacturing processes

The course is designed in such a way that individuals can go through the topics of their choice in any order they want. Therefore, it will not only be useful for SMEs who wish to introduce or increase the use of AI in their processes, but also for job trainers who want to expand their knowledge of the potential uses of AI.

Moreover, individuals who are interested in upskilling and reskilling in AI, irrespective of their previous career, can also freely access and go through the course. Thus, the course will be instrumental to increase their job prospects.

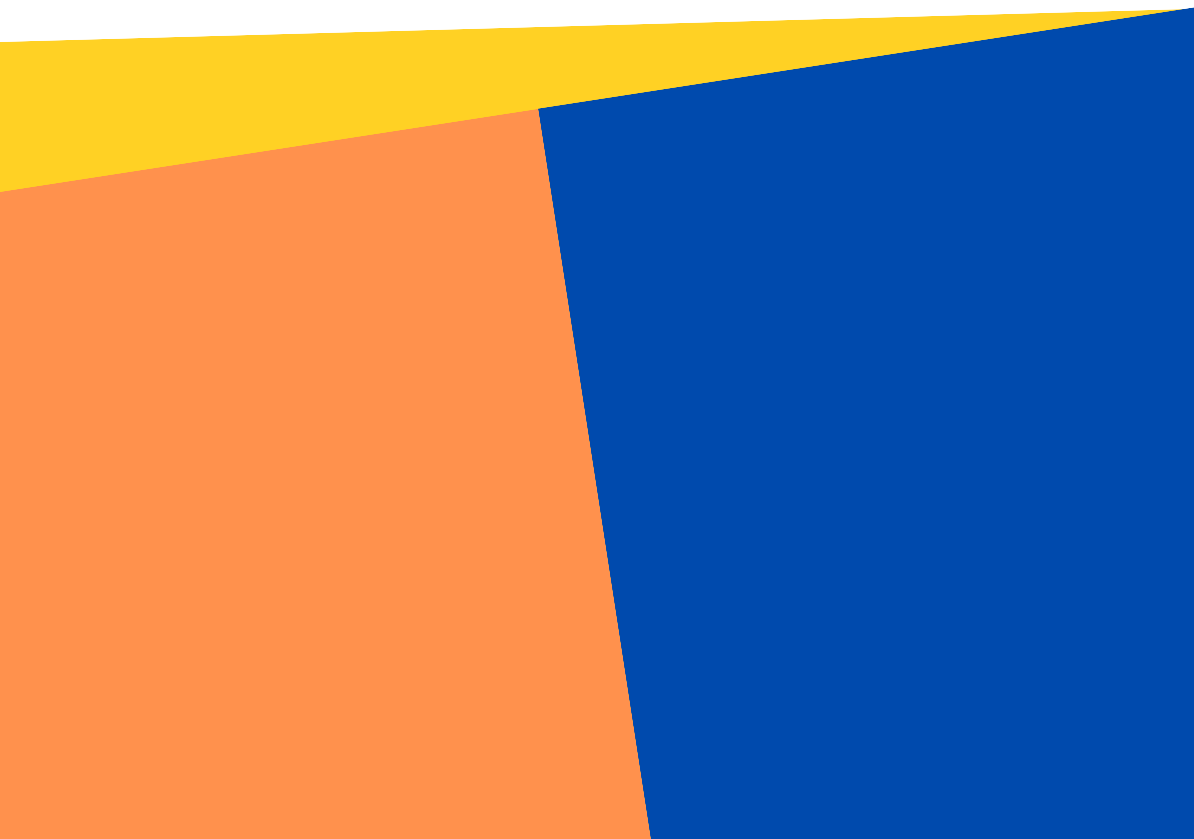


In November 2022, Open AI's Chat GPT was introduced to the world. In a short time, this tool has changed the views of a large proportion of the population on artificial intelligence. Our PAITool project was created before this wave of interest in artificial intelligence, and today there is no doubt that it was a step in the right direction.

Artificial intelligence is bringing about changes that will obviously be reflected in the disappearance of certain professions and job roles. In contrast to the changes brought about by conventional industrialisation, for the first time the changes may also affect the so-called "white collar" industries on a larger scale.

From this perspective, the project's goal of training people on the deployment of AI in different sectors is extremely important. Not everyone will be a data scientist, analyst or programmer, but a large number of people have a good chance of encountering AI and machine learning models in their practice.

If, thanks to our project, they know what lies ahead and look to the future as an opportunity to do their jobs better using AI, our project will have achieved its goals.



PROJECT PARTNERS



Slovak Center for Digital Innovation (SCDI) is a non-profit association applying for the status of European Digital Innovation Hub in the Slovak republic.

Role:

Lead coordinator, development of the PAITool course in Slovak & English, organisation of Train-the-Trainers and Upskilling workshops in Slovakia.



AcrossLimits is a dynamic Maltese technology research and consulting SME with its roots firmly derived from the innovation and ICT sectors.

Role:

Dissemination lead, integration of the PAITool course on the project website, organisation of Train-the-Trainers and Upskilling workshops in Malta.



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