

Management in the Age of Artificial Intelligence

Opening remarks by Ludger Ramme

Seminar on Friday 25.5.18 in Mainz

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The context of this years' Congress is in many regards particular. Tensions about the future of the European Union and questions on the future of work in an increasingly digitalised environment are among the most relevant issues. Today's seminars topic is fundamental. Unfortunately, it is yet little understood or discussed by company level managers and policy makers.

Considering the blurring lines in policy-making, social partners, managers and policy-makers have a shared responsibility in making the digital revolution work. For our planet, for our society and for the organisations we work in.

Never before has humanity had the chance to making large-scale changes happen together through interconnected technologies. The world's largest democratic block is built on the rule of law and social progress. The EU and its close partners have a unique opportunity both domestically and internationally to steer the development of these technologies forward in an inclusive and sustainable way. Just as it already did for the GDPR.

However, the strategic development of artificial intelligence and related technologies requires a decisive shift in thinking. Neither blind techno-optimism nor dystopian visions will help us. Instead, we need to think in terms of diversity. Incorporating diversity thinking in the development of AI allows extending the scope of the possible.

Human and artificial neural networks learn best when fed with diverse information. Different cultures, scientific approaches, personal backgrounds and management styles allow us to get better: by seeing their connections, building on various experiences and creating new framework conditions for collaboration, where each element, every worker and manager has its space and meaning.

As we had outlined during our last seminar and in our leadership of the future report and study, managers of the future will need to see and develop the connections between people, ideas and organisations. We have shown that a continuous leadership cycle of reflection, assessment, implementation and collaboration was more indicative to various performance dimensions than any other measure.

But what to think about scenarios of 50% job losses, machines killing humanity or having to become a cyborg to compete with machines? They are scenarios. It is up on us to decide who we want to be and where we want to go.

If we have connected leadership and integrated technologies to steer forward, how do we decide in which direction? As a European Social Partner we bring the questions of value and sense to the political debate. But we do more than that. We ask how we can use the tools we already have to attain our social, economic and environmental objectives.

During our seminar today, we will discuss our margins of action as managers, as manager organisations and as social partners. Instead of focussing on one particular question, we will try to discuss the connections I had mentioned. Are the legal, technological and policy tools we are using today fit for attaining sustainable development goals?

Finally, we will discuss the ethical questions of AI. How can it benefit us? Is the conception of AI today able to really put the human at the centre? Or do workers and later managers become superfluous? Why would managers become superfluous?

These are the questions that leaders need to tackle in today's world. This is why they are not superfluous. If we bring diversity in the process of leadership and technology development together with democratic processes, then we are well equipped for making this digital revolution a success.