

2nd Annual Conference
SSH-Breed
Sectorplan

**The Influence of Digitalisation on
Work, Prosperity and Entrepreneurship**
EDUCATION, LABOUR AND AUTOMATION

Rotterdam, 24 April 2026
Woudestein Campus, Forumzaal (M3-15)

Programme

08.30 – 09.00 Registration
 09.00 – 09.15 Welcome by Koen Swinnen
 Academic Lead Sectorplan SSH-Breed and Professor of Private Law and Public and Private Interests, Erasmus School of Law

| <h2>Education In Times of LLMs</h2> <p>Moderator: Sonia de Jager Postdoctoral researcher on Natural Language Processing, Erasmus School of Philosophy</p> | <h2>The Impact of AI on Labour Markets And Workers</h2> <p>Moderator: Nicole Christodoulides AI@EUR project manager</p> | <h2>Automation</h2> <p>Moderator: Milan Stürmer Postdoctoral researcher on the Philosophy of Technology, Erasmus School of Philosophy</p> |
|--|---|---|
| <p>09.15 – 09.30 Conference opening by Yuk Hui Director Erasmus Institute for Philosophy and Technology, Chair of Human Conditions, Erasmus School of Philosophy</p> | <p>12.45 – 13.30 KEYNOTE ADDRESS Artificial Intelligence at Work: Power, Participation and the Future of Labour Governance by Antonio Aloisi Associate professor of Law at IE University in Madrid</p> | <p>15.00 – 15.45 KEYNOTE ADDRESS ‘Cognitive automation’ and cultural occupation: AI and scholarship by Helen Beetham Former international consultant in digital education, now a researcher, writer and lecturer at the University of Manchester</p> |
| <p>09.30 – 10.15 KEYNOTE ADDRESS Is AI the future of education? by Felienne Hermans Professor of computer science education at the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam</p> | <p>13.30 – 13.45 Q&A</p> | <p>15.45 – 16.00 Q&A</p> |
| <p>10.15 – 10.30 Q&A</p> <p>10.45 – 11.30 PANEL DISCUSSION Maaïke Geuens ^{Open University (OU)} Marijke Kienstra ^{Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam (VU)} Tayfun Kucukyilmaz ^{RSM} Candida Leone ^{UvA} Bora Lushaj ^{EUR} Jelle Mampaey ^{Open University (OU)} Giulia Napolitano ^{ESPhil} Federica Violi ^{EUR}</p> | <p>13.45 – 14.30 PANEL DISCUSSION Halefom Abraha ^{Utrecht University} Melisa Esroy ^{ESHCC/University of Amsterdam (UvA)} Phuong Hoan Le ^{ESSB} Lilian Mitrou ^{University of Aegean} Kishan Mohansingh ^{Open University (OU)} Rebecca Moody ^{ESSB} Ward of Student Union ^{STUUR} Danae Tapia Contreras ^{Hacking/AI at Hogeschool Rotterdam}</p> | <p>16.00 – 16.45 PANEL DISCUSSION Yan Cong ^{ESSB} Matthew Dennis ^{TU Eindhoven} Jos van Dongen ^{ECDA} Andrew Dryhurst ^{ISS} Zihao Li ^{University of Glasgow} Filippo Santoni de Sio ^{TU Eindhoven} Maartje Schermer ^{ESHPM} Josephine Zwaan ^{ESPhil}</p> |
| <p>11.30 – 11.45 Q&A</p> <p>11.45 – 12.45 LUNCH BREAK</p> | <p>14.30 – 14.45 Q&A</p> <p>14.45 – 15.00 SHORT BREAK</p> | <p>16.45 – 17.00 Q&A</p> <p>17.00 – 18.00 BORREL</p> |

Not yet registered? Please do so via registration annual conference 24 April 2026

About the conference

2nd Annual Conference of
the Sectorplan SSH-Breed

EDUCATION, LABOUR AND AUTOMATION The Influence of Digitalisation on Work, Prosperity and Entrepreneurship

Rotterdam, Campus
Woudestein, 24 April 2026

On Friday, 24th of April, the Sectorplan SSH-Breed will host a transdisciplinary conference on promises, challenges, and societal impact of digitalisation. Bringing together colleagues from across the social sciences and humanities at Erasmus University Rotterdam, alongside national and international colleagues, this conference continues the ongoing conversations around the topics of Education, Work and Automation within and beyond Social Sciences and Humanities (SSH).

We are honoured to welcome three distinguished keynote speakers: **Felienne Hermans** (Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam) will open the conference with a keynote on Education during the morning session; **Antonio Aloisi** (IE University) will address the theme of Work in the midday lecture; and **Helen Beetham** (University of Manchester) will close the day with a keynote on Automation. Please find hereunder their biographies, and brief presentations of the themes.

CONFERENCE FORMAT:

each of the three themes will be introduced by a keynote lecture and followed by a plenary panel discussion with an interactive Q&A. With its wide-ranging themes, the conference is intended to represent the many aspects of the social sciences and humanities. The conversations will be geared towards ample, generous interpretations, seeking to establish some common lines of thought, towards productive frictions and possible interfaculty and interuniversity collaborations.

Break

11.45 – 12.45 LUNCH BREAK

14.45 – 15.00 SHORT BREAK

17.00 – 18.00 BORREL / THE END

KEYNOTE

Is AI the future of education?

by Felienne Hermans

Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam

ABSTRACT

“AI is going to revolutionize education” is the slogan of the day, and we know by now what AI is, but what exactly is the education that needs to be revolutionized? Teachers perform a rich palette of different tasks; from calling parents and planning school trips to grading and acting pedagogically. The focus on AI, and the tasks that an AI “can” perform, such as marking and making PowerPoints, creates an image of the teacher’s tasks that is narrow and cold. This keynote by professor of computer science didactics Felienne Hermans asks: What do we lose if we use AI in education? And what does that mean for other types of work?

BIOGRAPHY

Felienne Hermans is professor of computer science education at the Vrije Universiteit, Amsterdam. Her work is highly engaged in all things critically digital and digitally critical. She not only publishes for an academic audience and focuses her efforts on multiple (pedagogical) aspects of computer science, but also frequently appears on popular media outlets and national news: she is a highly-demanded expert on these topics. In 2021 she was awarded the Dutch Prize for ICT research, and she is currently working on a book. She also publishes a weekly opinion piece on the floating signifier that is AI: from learning, to teaching, to writing, to living, in the age of digital gibberish.

PANEL THEME

Education

PANEL MEMBERS

Maaïke Geuens Open University (OU)

Marijke Kienstra Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam (VU)

Tayfun Kucukyilmaz RSM

Candida Leone UvA

Bora Lushaj EUR

Jelle Mampaey Open University (OU)

Giulia Napolitano ESPhil

Federica Violi EUR

Digitalisation is changing all aspects of learning: in schools, universities and beyond. New tools, such as adaptive learning platforms, can in principle help widen access to education and improve the learning experience. At the same time, questions arise about whether these tools generate unnecessary obstacles to education, particularly if we consider issues of how the frameworks and data they are constructed from, and feed on, reinforce existing problems. Digital technologies will inevitably reshape all manner of interactions in the classroom and the assessment of academic performance in ways that we do not yet fully understand. It is therefore paramount to discuss how this new condition ought to become thoroughly scrutinized, by pedagogical professionals, before it is (probably) too late. Guided by the tone as set by the keynote speaker, this panel will critically look at how education systems can make use of digital technologies while aiming to uphold some of the values we normally ascribe to pedagogy and academic integrity.

KEYNOTE

‘Artificial Intelligence at Work: Power, Participation and the Future of Labour Governance’

by Antonio Aloisi

IE University

ABSTRACT

What do bosses do in the age of artificial intelligence? As decisions on hiring, performance, pay and dismissal are offloaded to algorithmic systems, managerial power is amplified yet obscured, while worker autonomy narrows. AI-driven management promises objectivity but intensifies control, embedding discretion in code and rendering authority harder to scrutinise or contest. Managers themselves become dependent on systems they scarcely understand, producing a paradox of simultaneous empowerment and dispossession. Drawing on EU legal developments, this talk questions whether existing safeguards suffice and argues for a multidimensional, participatory governance model in which collective actors help ensure that workplace AI redistributes power rather than entrenching digital hierarchies.

BIOGRAPHY

Antonio Aloisi is associate professor of Law at IE University in Madrid, where he teaches European and comparative labor law, specializing in education on digital and platform regulation. He co-leads the “Lawtomatic” Jean Monnet Centre of Excellence and is affiliated with the “LawAhead” Center on the Legal Profession. Aloisi is also a fellow at the UNESCO Chair in AI Ethics & Governance.

PANEL THEME

Labour

Digitalisation is reshaping how work is organized in our society. New technologies can, in principle, empower individuals with more flexibility in their working lives, enabling them to, for example, work from various locations and taking part in platform-based work. However, new technologies and recent development also bring plenty of risks. For instance, algorithmic management systems can increase efficiency, but they also raise concerns about surveillance, fairness, and privacy at work. This panel delves into how employers, workers, and policy makers can respond to these changes and support sustainable and fair working conditions.

PANEL MEMBERS

Halefom Abraha Utrecht University

Melissa Esroy ESHCC/University of Amsterdam (UvA)

Phuong Hoan Le ESSB

Lilian Mitrou University of Aegean

Kishan Mohansingh Open University (OU)

Rebecca Moody ESSB

Danae Tapia Contreras Hacking/AI at Hogeschool Rotterdam

Ward of Student Union STUUR

KEYNOTE

'Cognitive automation' and cultural occupation: AI and scholarship

by Helen Beetham

University of Manchester

ABSTRACT

When John McCarthy chose the term 'artificial intelligence' to describe the branch of cybernetics his team were working on, his first choice was 'automation studies'. Today, AI still promises (and threatens) 'cognitive automation'. The promise is that the labour of teaching, learning, scholarship and professional work can be 'enhanced' by automating away those tasks that are least rewarding. The threat, as we have heard in other talks, is that labour is disciplined and intellectual life impoverished. This talk examines the promise/threat of automation in relation to scholarship and research, suggesting that the analogy with automation of manual labour is both highly instructive and ultimately limited. Instead, tracing links between cognitive automation and colonialism, Helen Beetham asks us to see today's AI project as one of cultural occupation, in research and beyond.

BIOGRAPHY

Helen is a former international consultant in digital education, now a researcher, writer and lecturer at the University of Manchester. Her edited book *Rethinking Pedagogy for a Digital Age* (Routledge) is in its third edition and she publishes on topics ranging from human rights through digital feminism to critical AI. Her blog, *Imperfect Offerings*, is widely cited for its 'biting' critique of AI in education, and she regularly keynotes in Europe and beyond on the 'cultural occupation' that she diagnoses behind the state-corporate project of generative AI.

PANEL THEME

Automation

PANEL MEMBERS

Yan Cong ^{ESSB}

Matthew Dennis ^{TU Eindhoven}

Jos van Dongen ^{ECDA}

Andrew Dryhurst ^{ISS}

Zihao Li ^{University of Glasgow}

Filippo Santoni de Sio ^{TU Eindhoven}

Maartje Schermer ^{ESHPM}

Josephine Zwaan ^{ESPhil}

Automation, from robots to CCTV surveillance, is often presented as desirable: the relegation of dangerous, repetitive, or highly complex tasks to machines can free up time for people to focus on other kinds of work. However, this utopian dream is not without its problems. Often, automation does not decrease workload equitably, but in fact creates ever-larger gaps between societal classes.

While automation can sometimes improve performance, reduce accidents, and increase productivity in many sectors, it also raises challenging fundamental questions: about human agency, autonomy, and accountability.

This panel explores how automation can be used in ways that benefit society, while also addressing its disruptive effects and the need for public oversight and discussions on legislation, ownership and the future of technology.

Not yet registered?

Please do so via registration
annual conference 24 April 2026

<https://www.eur.nl/en/events/2nd-annual-ssh-breed-sectorplan-conference-influence-digitalisation-work-prosperity-and-2026-04-24>

