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## “ROBO\_LUCIÓN”: HIGHER PRODUCTIVITY, HIGHER EMPLOYABILITY AND HIGHER BIRTH RATES

by Pedro Antunes - Partner and Head of Labour Department

Pedro Antunes is CCA's Partner of the Labour Department with experience in providing complex employment law advice to Portuguese and foreign employers and companies. Pedro is an important element in preventive advice, being considered a problem solver. He has an extensive experience in transfer of undertakings and workforce and restructuring operations, including downsizing processes, acquisition of companies or establishments and in the implementation of benefits policies.

Digital transformation has left us without options. Whereas, before, we could procrastinate or not on using certain technological platforms, on choosing between *business as usual*, familiar to us for many decades, analogue and with no surprises, and new technologies, disruptive and full of updates by the second, the truth is that, in today's world, we have no choice. Digitalisation is the driving force of society and we will inevitably have to embrace it if we want to remain part of the change.

Starting to replace people by autonomous business processes is already a reality that will lead us to take other steps, creating new challenges and new jobs, more focused on human skills, leaving the repetitive and automatic processes that do not require human decision for their execution to machines.

The humanoid robot, recently advertised by Tesla destined to perform repetitive and dangerous tasks, foreshadows the beginning

of this spectacular reality. I say spectacular not because I am a technology addict, but because I associate it with two pieces of good news: (i) it will free human beings for tasks where they are really needed, increasing their focus and quality of life and (ii) although millions of jobs will be eliminated, I have no doubt that it will create many others, of added value and with even more human skills, and the balance tips to the positive side, when everything is weighed.



Times are changing and we should not wait only for the push from technology companies. States themselves should also be the first responsible entities for supporting companies, not only as regulators of artificial intelligence, but also as an example, supporting and encouraging paradigm shifts. Since they will receive Community support, states should want to be the first to play this role of catalysts for innovation. It is also the right time for Governments to impose a paradigm shift in the public sector, determining a worker self-accountability character, subjecting public workers to rigorous evaluations, seeking to solve, in this way, the productivity problem, in order

to test more flexible models. Only after identifying and solving the productivity problem can and should we start thinking about other forms of flexible work, such as changing the working week from five to four days. This is one measure, among many others, that will certainly boost consumption and shake up the entire economic sector; it will promote family harmony and even help solve other social problems, such as climate change and increasing birth rates. These are the factors that nowadays have become real benefits that attract workers' attention, overriding proposals reduced to monetary values, whether at the time of hiring or in retaining talent.

Artificial Intelligence is at the heart of digital transformation, transversal to all market sectors and with results that should make us all pleased and optimistic. We must turn our attention to this context in which we find ourselves, where workers regard certain benefits, such as remote working or a four-day working week, as a more important factor than certain differences in wage figures. The global paradigm has shifted. That of life and work. And we, legislators, employers and the state have to create conditions to simplify work relations and improve the lives of workers and new generations of talent who seek, above all, balance between personal and professional life.