

CHINA CROSSROADS

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How Workers Experience the Rise of Robots, AI, and Automation in Their Jobs in China and Europe

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Our speaker will share key findings from her PhD research on how workers in Europe and China experience the rise of robots, AI, and automation in their daily jobs. Rather than focusing on the technology itself, her study looks at the human side of change—how people make sense of new machines, what worries them, and what helps them adapt. She conducted over 40 interviews and spent time observing workers on the ground in both Italy and China. What she found challenges the idea that culture alone determines whether people accept new technology. Instead, how companies manage change—whether they involve workers in decisions, communicate openly, and provide proper training—matters much more than national background. Interestingly, in some Chinese factories, managers' low expectations of workers actually create the very resistance they fear. In Italy, where automation has been introduced more gradually and participatively, workers tend to see robots as helpful tools rather than threats. She will also discuss the particular challenges faced by middle managers, who often find themselves caught between company goals and employee concerns. Finally, she will offer practical suggestions for introducing new technology in ways that protect workers' sense of purpose and identity—because the success of automation depends not on the machine, but on the people who work alongside it.

[Rosanna Terminio](#) is a consultant, contributor, and lecturer specializing in innovation and strategy for organizations, as well as a human resources strategist. Together with two Chinese partners, she is the Partner of AsecorpChina Business Consulting, a bespoke brand providing strategy consulting and operational solutions for European companies operating in and in China. This year, the brand celebrates 20 years of doing business in and with China. On 14th July 2026, she obtained her PhD at Universitat Oberta de Catalunya Cum Laude for a thesis related to the impact of Intelligent Technology on the Organization and Work. She published a research paper presented at the 2018 Robo-Philosophy Conference at the University of Vienna titled “The impact of RAAI (Robotics Automation and Artificial Intelligence) in the working environment from the employee perspective, a scoping review”. The paper has been included in the conference proceedings and selected for the 3rd Conference on Economy and Enterprises by The Economists of Catalunya, Spain, and included in the project “Digitalization and Work” financed by the Spanish Ministry of Economy, Industry and Competitiveness. She has contributed to the book “The work we need: people and industry 4.0” published in Italy by Guerini e Associati. In 2025, she invested as a co-founder in the innovative startup SoftLab Zone that integrates a VR environment and EGG to assess talent's soft skills.

[China Crossroads](#) hosts talks on all topics related to China, including business, foreign policy, and other areas as they relate to China, the idea being that China is both already a “crossroads” of the world and itself at a “crossroads” in terms of its future global influence. For more information, contact Frank Tsai at editor@shanghai-review.org.